

THE JESSE JAMES STORIES

A WEEKLY DEALING WITH THE DETECTION OF CRIME

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 42.

Price, Five Cents.



THE BANDIT KING, WITH ONE POWERFUL ARM STRUCK A BLOW THAT SENT GOLDING REFLING

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JESSE JAMES' DOUBLE GAME:

OR,

Golding, the Dandy Sport from Denver.

By W. B. LAWSON.

CHAPTER I.

THE ATTACK ON THE "GHOST TRAIN."

"We'll meet the leader of the James boys' gang yet. That bandit can never be caught napping."

"This is certainly the sharpest game I ever heard of against Jesse. It has been elaborately planned, and without regard to expense. And to you, Raines, will belong the chief glory if the scheme is successful."

"I don't care for the glory, if I may only assist in the riddance of this part of the country of the most fiendish outlaw that ever preyed upon the lives and property of honest people."

"We are not throwing the time and trouble away in any case, since we have succeeded already in getting a good bit of treasure through in safety."

"That is worth something, Quelton. But it also shows that the outlaws are wary."

It was along the wildest section of track on the

M. P. railroad that an express train, westbound, was bowling at an almost reckless rate of speed. For it was a dark night, and, owing to recent rains, the road was not in the best of condition.

The train was a special, and for reasons which it is easy to explain it was called the "ghost train."

One of these reasons was that the cars were painted white; a second, that it was run only at night, and that few of the station hands along the route really knew anything about it.

Once it had been held up by Jesse James, the redoubtable outlaw, with a small gang of followers. But for some reason, he was shyer than usual, and it was not thought that he looted the train of any treasure. Yet there was no reason to think that he suspected it to be running as a decoy for entrapping him.

The first speaker, addressed as Raines, suddenly sprang to a window, exclaiming:

"Ah! we're slowing up, and that means danger."

It was true. Then, within the dimly lighted express car, a startling thing happened. The man called Raines wheeled away from the window, revolver in hand. His voice rang out in notes of command. Quelton leaped up, and from some unseen hiding place a rifle had found its way to his grasp. There was a mysterious set of sounds, like the whir of rollers along a track, and a section of the polished paneling along the side of the car rolled back.

From the narrow space which had been between the inner panels and real outer wall of the car a dozen men stepped with military precision.

Every man was armed after the manner of Quelton and Raines.

The train had been moving at such a high rate of speed that it had not yet been brought quite to a standstill. And in the brief interval before the onward motion ceased Raines spoke, in low but perfectly distinct tones:

"Men," he said, "the moment for a test of your mettle and discipline has arrived. The expected signal was just fired—the signal that tells me of a second hold-up of the 'ghost train.' The first time the attempt was allowed to succeed; that was a bait, and it was such a valuable one that the foxy leader of the James boys' gang never quite suspected its purpose. The secret has been so carefully guarded that until now not a man of you has been told the true object of the training you have had, and the mechanism of this car's construction. In another moment we shall be face to face with the most invincible bandit on this or any other continent, and he won't be alone. We wish to take him alive; but, if he is too wary or his band too powerful, so that he has a fair show to escape, you are to riddle him with bullets. Every man of you is a dead shot, and you will not miss such a good mark. Now, back to your stations, until I give the signal to appear. Then—discipline!"

The leader of the picked deputies bowed in silence, and, with the same military precision with which their every movement was timed, they returned to their first positions.

The panels rolled back into place, and only Quelton and Raines remained in view. At the same instant the train stopped, and on the air there broke such a pandemonium of yells, banging of guns, screams of either real or simulated terror, crashing of bullets and stones through glass, that even a sem-

blance of coolness called for the exercise of wonderful nerve on the part of the two men in the express car.

The side door of the car was closed and bolted, after the usual fashion. But no sooner had the train come to a stop than a ponderous log, used as a battering ram, crashed through, tearing off socket and screws. The door fell, and through the opening came a shower of bullets, like hail.

From the darkness outside a stern voice shouted:

"I see two of you in there, and it is the usual call; hands up!"

One of Raines' hands went up, but it held the revolver. Bang—bang—bang! it spluttered, sending its messengers straight as a die toward the voice from the darkness. At the same time, he got out of direct range of the demolished door.

As the shooting within began, that from without nearly ceased. There was a scattered popping along the length of the train, but the passenger coaches seemed to be the object of the shots. The design was evidently to intimidate the passengers and train hands, to prevent any interference with the main object which the desperadoes had in view.

As Raines thus defied the command to throw up his hands, Quelton boldly stationed himself at the leader's side, and, pulling a revolver, joined in the chorus.

For a brief space there was no retort from the one who had called for a surrender. Then there was a sharper report than those which had sounded in the first part of the attack, and the right arm of Raines dropped useless at his side.

His revolver dropped to the floor of the car, and he gave utterance to a groan of pain.

"We've kept up the bluff about long enough, I reckon," muttered Quelton.

"You cave first, then, and I'll seem to give up because you've deserted me."

Up went Quelton's hands. At the same time he stood in such a position that the unseen marksman could not draw a bead on Raines.

The latter cried, in a voice loud enough to be heard by the enemy:

"So you give up at the first smell of powder, you craven!"

"I reckon my life is worth more than any amount of boodle on this train!" was Quelton's retort.

"Coward!" howled Raines, with well-simulated dis-

gust. "Then the responsibility for this surrender shall rest on you, as it belongs. I can't hold out alone. Where are the brave lot of passengers that we had on board? I heard a lot of bragging from them before we pulled out of Kansas City."

"It is this side that talks, gentlemen," spoke a voice close to the outside of the broken door. At the same time a dark, fierce face looked in, the bearded lips showing just a trace of mockery. It was a face which Raines had seen before, but which was only recognized by Quelton through a sense of the invincible power behind it. It was the face of Jesse James.

So far, the programme, as planned by Raines, had been carried out almost to the letter. The leader of the deputies had not spared himself, as the bullet-shattered wrist would testify. To decoy the bandit chief into the car had been his prime object; and here was the famous outlaw, ready, as it seemed, to swallow the fatal hook.

"Step to the front, Jack Raines, and don't be bashful," cried Jesse.

So he was recognized! Raines could not hide a start of surprise. But he obeyed the command, and stepped in front of Quelton. The hand which was not disabled was upheld, the empty palm outward.

"You have the drop, and I suppose you'll come in and take what you want," growled Raines.

The eyes of the two men met. In those of Jesse James there was a strangely significant glitter, and his stern lips were curled by a faint, mocking smile.

"You seem to be in a hurry to have the affair over with, Jack Raines," he said.

"It is but natural that I should wish to get over the road and have my arm attended to. For God's sake, Jesse James!—can't you see that I'm holding myself up here by pure nerve?"

"Oh, I'll accommodate you in the matter of dispatch, if that is what you are hungering for. But it must be in my own way. Boys!"

As this summons rang from the lips of the bandit, he leaped lightly into the car—and alone! A strange thrill of exultation shook the form of Raines. Could it be that the wily outlay was to tumble into the trap so readily, and without a backer to stand for him at the fatal moment?

Quelton caught a swift, signaling glance from the eyes of the leader.

With his hands still uplifted defenselessly, Quelton

stepped closer to the wall of the car, on the side where the shattered door lay. By a deft movement he pressed an electric button with his foot. And in every car of the train a bell tinkled simultaneously.

On board that train, disguised as passengers, there were a full hundred of armed deputies and Pinkerton men. The signal was for them.

Even as the bells sounded, four of the bandit's followers sprang into the express car, at the heels of the leader, every man of them with a revolver in each hand, and three of whom Raines recognized at a glance. They were Frank James, Cole Younger and another, less famous then, but whose name had a destiny of its own, as yet unrealized—Hank Starr, of Kansas.

"A good haul!" was the swift thought of Raines, the fearless sheriff.

The paneling or false wall of the car slid almost noiselessly apart. But, before the disciplined deputies could level their rifles, a perfect sheet of flame, with the crash of a dozen weapons, poured murderously in at the demolished door.

Only two of the concealed men were left standing.

CHAPTER II.

AT BEAVER RUN.

As stated, only two of Raines' concealed deputies were left on their feet after the terrible fusillade from the doorway of the express car. It should be added that the two who did not fall were both wounded and clutched at the movable panels for support.

Even before the deadly firing ended, Raines, with spirit unquenched, in spite of the conviction that death as well as defeat stared him in the face, fell back against the side of the car near the doorway, so as to be out of the way of the marksman outside. At the same time, with his able hand, he pulled a revolver and fired point-blank at Jesse James.

The range was short, yet, as was by many superstitiously believed, the outlaw seemed to bear a charmed life. He glared back at the sheriff and one of his own weapons flashed.

Raines fell, a bullet in his heart, while Quelton, with a fonder love of life—or, perchance, with more in the world to live for—waved his empty hands above his head, crying in a voice that quavered with terror:

"I yield!—I yield! Spare me, for the sake of my wife and children!"

Cole Younger approached him with a short laugh, and in another second Quelton would have had a bullet in his brain.

"Hold!" commanded Jesse James. "He may be of use to us. See that those two bleeding devils are disarmed, and if there is no help for them, put them out of their misery. We are not yet quite clear of Raines' crowd, though we will be in a moment. Hear them shooting!"

Quelton sank upon the box where he had been sitting before the beginning of the fight, and covered his face with his hands. In spite of his plea for mercy he was a brave man, and had there been anything to gain in a good cause he would have cheerfully fought to the death.

Within the express car there ensued a brief space of comparative silence, for not one of the outlaws spoke. All were waiting for the next move in the tragedy. All knew that the invincible will of Jesse James had ordered everything, and not a man doubted his success, heavy as the odds had been against him at the start.

There came a jerk of the train, and then the express car was in motion, its speed rapidly increasing.

At the same time the mounted bandits outside began to speed away from the scene of the attack, pursued only by the blindly discharged shots of the deputies who had poured forth from the passenger cars at the signal from Quelton.

The latter lifted his head, and found that Jesse James was seated in front of him with his stern countenance evincing none of the exultation which he must naturally have experienced under the circumstances.

"Well, it is about over," was his comment. Then he added, addressing Quelton:

"We may as well understand each other at the outset. I have not spared your life for any love of you, nor because I consider you harmless. You had the good sense to cave rather than throw your life away. I might do the same if I were in your shoes. What shall I call you?"

"I am Roderick Quelton, and I don't claim to be famous, or a man of nerve; but, you merciless fiend, if I ever had you as you now hold me, I wouldn't spare your life for a second."

"That is all right, but our positions won't be re-

versed, I'm thinking. You see we are moving, and at a rattling good pace. Do you know what has happened?"

"I suppose you have killed every man who was fit to live, and taken possession of the train."

"Only partly true, Quelton. Probably the biggest part of your crew are alive, and stalled there where we brought you to a standstill. We have uncoupled the forward part of the train—the express, baggage car and tender, with the locomotive, of course—from the passenger coaches, and now we are going on our way rejoicing. The most of my comrades are on horseback, and they aren't afraid of your deputies chasing them with a couple of stalled cars. Do you see the point?"

Quelton bowed in dejected assent.

"Now, I'll have to ask you for a bit of information. Your answers can't alter the result to the authorities, even if you make up a lot of lies to tell me, but a single lie will cost you your breath the instant it is uttered. This has gotten the name of the 'ghost train,' and, as I suspected, it has been running as a trap to catch me in. The next station, which is Beaver Run, is a small place, and express trains don't ordinarily stop there. Do you know what the intention was in regard to this to-night?"

"We were to stop at Beaver Run to-night," said Quelton, indifferently.

"And do you know why?"

"For orders."

"You see, Quelton, we had to shoot your conductor, and the engineer either didn't know what you were to do, else he pretended not to know. We needed him too bad to serve him as we did the conductor. Now, Mr. Quelton, you will answer me this, and be careful that you keep your tongue straight in the answer. How many more deputies have you in waiting at Beaver Run?"

"Not one."

"You are sure?"

"I am sure that Raines said nothing of them, and he would have been likely to tell me if there were to be any."

"All right. If it turns out that you are mistaken I'll promise that it will be your last blunder. Did you have any tip to warn you of the intended attack on your train to-night?"

"No."

"Sure of that, too?"

"I am sure of that. But we knew that the night was a favorable one for your infernal work, and we were rather more on the alert than usual. We have had to run this train a good many times when we were morally certain that there would be no hold-up, just to keep up appearances. We didn't take you to be a fool, Jesse James."

"Much obliged. I'll have to say, though, that if you were better prepared than usual to-night, I should have had a cinch had I chosen one of the bright evenings when you were off guard. There are good men among you detectives, sheriffs and deputies, but you do some of the fooliest things that a man in his senses could ever think of."

The other members of James' gang who were in the express car were busy cleaning up the signs of carnage, tossing the dead deputies from the moving car, and looking after the hurts of the wounded—for two were not fatally shot, and there was a chance for life with them, in spite of Jesse's grim orders.

Quelton could hear the growl of their voices chiming with the roar of the swiftly flying train. He was agitated by no sense of fear; such as he had felt at the beginning had relapsed into a feeling of stolid indifference. He had a wife and children, as he had intimated in the momentary weakness which he had betrayed. But he no longer gave them a thought.

The distance from the point where the attack had occurred to the next station was about sixteen miles.

There was one flag station intervening, but only one train a day stopped there each way, and it was made little account of. They were already nearing Beaver Run, and so swiftly did they sweep around a broad curve that it seemed as if the train would leave the rails.

Then there was the short roar of a quickly crossed bridge, the glimmer of a few switch lights, a clattering over frogs, and then the jolt and jerk and hiss of the air brakes proclaimed their arrival.

Quelton had been disarmed, and under penalty of instant death if he disobeyed he was commanded to accompany Jesse James into the station, with a pledge to make no attempt to escape. It was taken for granted that he would make no indiscreet remarks.

In the arrival of the ghost train at Beaver Run there would have been nothing out of the ordinary to attract comment from the station master, but for

the absence of the passenger coaches which were usually run, and for the fact that it was not a conductor's uniform that was worn by the man who came carelessly into the waiting-room and asked for orders.

The station agent had no knowledge of the real mission of the "ghost train." He was a young man, the son of a farmer who lived in the vicinity.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, seeing that it was a stranger who stood in the doorway. "Where's Mayfield?"

"Dead!" was the grim answer.

"Dead!—how is that?"

"Shot."

"You don't say! And who in thunderation are you? I'll be durned if I like the looks."

"Of me, eh? Sorry, Butchy, but I hadn't time to fix myself up after the raid, and I didn't suppose you would be so cursed particular. But what are the orders for the 'ghost?' Any from the dispatcher's office?"

"Yes, you are to wait here for the east-bound special, which don't make any stop till it gets to St. Joe."

A keener glitter came into the eyes of the bandit chief.

"An east-bound special, you say?" he exclaimed. "What sort of cargo does it carry?"

Butchy, as the young station master was called, gave the other a keen glance.

"Who're you, anyhow?" he demanded again. "If Mayfield, the conductor, has been shot it is my business to find out what the durned difficulty might be. I'll see Sam, the engineer, I reckon."

"I reckon not, youngster."

Butchy was looking straight into the tube of a revolver, and he saw that the hammer was pulled back.

"My lord!" he gasped.

"Keep your head, youngster, until I'm ready to blow the top of it off. How soon does the special arrive? Give the word, quick!"

"In about—about twenty minutes."

"And who does it carry?"

"Some mining people—stockholders, supers and that sort—from Colorado."

"Baggage and express? Talk fast!"

"I don't know."

"You do know. You haven't a minute to live if you keep back the truth."

"Good Lord! True as I live, I don't know. And who in darnation be you?"

"I am Jesse James—excuse me for not introducing myself! That is why I am so particular to know about the gentry on board that special, and the sort of boodle they are likely to have on board. By the dickens!—I wish I had more of my boys along with me. I little knew that I was to run right up against another rich haul the same night. Look here, Butchy: how many helpers have you hanging around the station to-night?"

"Not a soul, true as I'm a livin' sinner."

"And weren't there anybody waiting to take this train?"

"Wall—er—yes, I reckon I did sell a ticket to a feller 'a spell ago."

A signaling shout rang from the lips of Jesse James.

CHAPTER III.

GOLDING, THE "DANDY SPORT."

At the moment when Jesse James, the bandit king, sent forth that signal which was intended for his brother Frank and Cole Younger, the "feller" to whom Butchy had sold a ticket fully an hour earlier was a listener to the exciting confab in the little station office.

The office in question had one window that opened to the back of the station. The small room was overheated by a stove, for the night, with the wild wind that blew from the north, was decidedly chilly.

The window was open at the bottom a few inches for ventilation. A long shelf, used as a writing table and on which were the telegraph sounder and key, extended along the entire width of the room and under the window.

It was outside close to the window that the intended passenger on the "ghost train" was crouching.

That he had glided out of the waiting-room just after the whistle of the approaching train sounded, the station master did not notice.

The man rose several times from his crouching posture while James was questioning Butchy, but he took care to step back from the window far enough so that he could not be observed from within.

"This is luck—bad and good mixed into the same

dough!" muttered the man when he had taken in the full significance of what Jesse James was saying.

"The bad part of it comes of their risking so many good lives and so much good money as a bait for that devilfish, who always manages to get the bait with out being nipped by the hook. I told 'em so. But they took me for a freak. Golding was too much of a sport—that is what they said of me. Maybe he is, but even a sport may have eyes—and ears—and understanding—and he might be able to shoot a gun—and hit a barn—at eleven paces! Jiminy!—and that is Jesse James. I might possibly put my mark on him, but some of his best men are close at hand, and if I missed killing him at the first shot my life wouldn't be worth two bits. Ah—what is that they're talking about?"

When the speaker—the words were really whispered under his breath—began his soliloquy, Butchy had not spoken of the special east-bound train. Then the man who called himself Golding, the sport, was standing back five paces from the window.

But when the special was mentioned, and Jesse James began to ask questions about it, the listener came up so close to the window that the brim of his soft hat touched the glass.

It was a wonder that the bandit chief did not see him then. Golding appeared for the moment indifferent as to whether he were seen or not. He had pulled out a revolver upon which a gleam of light fell from within. The weapon was dainty as a toy, gold-mounted, as shiny as if it had just been taken out of a chamois-skin case.

But it was a forty-four caliber, and Golding had the name of knowing how to shoot.

He was standing thus when Jesse James uttered the signal yell. He heard an answering shout from the train, then the clatter of booted feet along the platform, and a half-dozen of James' outlaw comrades darkened the doorway.

One was Frank James, and it was his voice that demanded:

"What is the row? You gave the danger signal, Jess."

"There is more work for us, and we have barely fifteen minutes to get ready for it in. And there is a spy about. Search every part of the depot, outside and in, and shoot anything that you may find alive, even if it is only a woman or a cat!" ordered the

leader, with a fierceness that fairly appalled the station master.

"There ain't 'ary woman or cat nigh here to shoot!" exclaimed Butchy.

Frank James and his companions did not wait for a second bidding, but plunged out into the darkness.

"And so they want me," muttered Golding. "And I haven't time to see them. That special, due now in about ten minutes, has got to be warned. They haven't a hundred deputies on board to help them to fight these fiends, and Jesse James would not spare a man of them. There are no minutes to be lost."

Golding glided away from the window just as Jesse cast his eagle gaze in that direction. That glance, swift as a flash of light, caught a glimpse of the soft hat worn by Goldy, the sport, for that was his nickname, as the latter passed through the rift of light that streamed from the window.

Bang—crash! A shot from the bandit's revolver zipped past the cheek of the station master and shivered a pane of glass as it sped in pursuit of Goldy's hat.

The hat was struck, but only the brim of it. At the same time Jesse brought the butt of the weapon across Butchy's left temple, and the fellow was stretched on the floor of the office. That left Jesse James at liberty to join in the pursuit of the eaves-dropper.

By this time Goldy was running. He reached the railroad track at a point just ahead of the locomotive and then ran on over the ties. There was a curve just beyond the station, so that the flare of the headlight fell upon the runner for only an instant. He was seen, but the shots which were sent after him were fired blindly, nevertheless, and he was, untouched.

In another moment a switchlight was reached. To possess himself of the lantern, with its red and blue glass lights, was but the work of a second. Then Goldy ran on again with that wonderful light, swift pace.

Once he thought he heard the sound of the approaching train. At the same time he became apprised of other sounds about which there could not be a doubt. One of his pursuers had found a horse—the station master's, probably—and was following him with that, and at a speed that he could not long hope to outstrip.

Still he kept on, anxious to get as far as possible

from the point of danger before he should meet and bring the imperiled train to a halt.

The roar of it suddenly burst upon his ears. There was a ravine a little further on through which the track passed, and it was as the train emerged from that that the noise of it became distinct. At the same time the glare of the headlight flashed blindingly in the eyes of Goldy.

He waved the red signal light.

A backward glance showed him the horseman, distinctly revealed and almost upon him.

There was a flash, a report, and the signal lantern was shattered in the hand of Golding.

Almost simultaneously the little gold-mounted weapon spoke. The horse was jerked to one side, and then sped away from the track out into the black gloom, with the rider lying across the saddle, swaying to and fro, and coughing blood into the flying mane.

"Pity it couldn't have been Jesse himself," muttered Golding, as he turned to see if the brief signal had sufficed as a warning.

The train was slowing up. Goldy did not leave the track, although the pilot of the engine was within a yard of him before it stopped. A grimy face, that of the engineer glared down at him.

"What is this?" he demanded.

At the same time Golding saw something as grim in its expression as the face of the engineer. That was the barrel of a Winchester pointed at him from the other side of the cab, and sighted by the eye of the fireman.

"Good!" exclaimed Goldy. "I see you aren't a defenseless pair of innocents. I just wanted to say that Jesse and Frank James and eight or ten of their best men are out yonder ready to pay you their usual compliments. I thought you might like to know."

"Who are you that takes so much trouble?" retorted the engineer, suspiciously. "You look mighty dandy."

"And I'm as dandy as I look. Don't shoot that gun at me at such short range—the smoke from it might smooch my linen."

"Get into the cab here, lively."

"It's a dirty place, but I'm willing to oblige. Only, hadn't you better tell the people aboard your train? The 'ghost' has been held up to-night, Mayfield and Raines killed, and the business end of the train taken possession of by Jesse. That's how they come to be

here. Come, man, don't be suspicious of your friends. It is a sign that you're foolish."

The Winchester was lowered, and the engineer at the same time had a feeling that he was confronted by a man who could give orders that it would be wise for him to obey. Just then the conductor came up, and a half-dozen well-dressed men, passengers, all armed to the teeth, straggled in his rear.

The conductor's name was Bagley, and the instant his eyes fell on Golding he uttered an ejaculation of surprise.

"You, Goldy! What is the call?"

In a few words the other explained. At the same time, as they looked toward the station they saw the lights which marked its position suddenly go out. They could also see the headlight of the other locomotive, which seemed to be in motion.

"Every man out of your train—quick!" cried Golding.

One of the passengers bounded away, accompanied by a porter, to see that the order was obeyed.

"The instant they're out, reverse your engine and then jump!" was the next order, from the same commanding lips.

"Great God!" gasped Bagley. "That train is making straight for ours, on the same track!"

This was what Goldy's quicker eyes, that missed nothing, had taken in at the first glance at the moving headlight of the other locomotive. He divined the meaning of it at the same time.

Jesse James, knowing now that there had been a listener to his talk with the station master, and that the spy had succeeded in warning the special of its danger, had promptly concocted a scheme for executing his designs in spite of that warning, and in spite of the small number of men at his command.

With all of the bandit's reputation for recklessness, yet he was not the man to take unnecessary risks. Upon occasion he would stake a bold game on a bluff, but his unerring instinct seemed always to warn him when that kind of play was likely to fail.

To order his own men off the "ghost train," to open the engine's throttle with his own hand and then leap off, and so to send the ponderous messenger thundering on its mission of destruction was but the act of a second.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RESCUE OF THE SPECIAL.

It had not been the intention of Jesse James to use the train which he had captured as a means of escaping with the treasure which he had seized. When the train was held up the entire gang was, as usual, superbly mounted.

The understanding with his men before the attack was made was complete. They knew that the bandit leader would have the forward cars uncoupled from the others, and go on to the next station with that part of the train. They were to follow with the horses, both mounted and led.

At the station the express would be relieved of the valuable packages and the captured booty would be taken by Jesse James and his comrades on their horses, when the latter should arrive.

It was calculated that the horses would get to the station within an hour, at farthest, after the train.

Such was the programme. So far, it had been carried out to the letter. The money and other valuable parcels had been taken care of by Jesse, Frank James and Cole Younger. The final division of the spoils would come later.

When the bandit king sent the locomotive of the "ghost train" speeding toward the special he was momentarily expecting the arrival of the main party of outlaws with the horses.

If, as he planned, the special should be wrecked in the collision, a victory over the injured and demoralized passengers would be easy, even if reinforcements should fail to arrive in time to take a hand in the fight.

Thus carefully did Jesse James plan his nefarious work. Schemes were hatched in his active and brilliant mind with marvelous rapidity.

The James brothers stood side by side on the station platform, watching the swift forward lunge of the locomotive which had been sent on the deadly mission.

Jesse raised a night glass to his eyes.

"The devil take the luck!" he growled.

"What is the matter?"

"Every man on that special seems to be piling out of the cars. Somebody has certainly given them a full warning, and they're counting on giving me a complete checkmate."

"Can you make out the faces of any of the passengers?"

"Not clearly. There's Bagley, the conductor. I had him face to face once, and had the drop on him, but there was nothing in it. I want to make out who it is that has warned them. Probably another of my men has turned traitor, and I have been spied on when I didn't know it. Ah!—there is the spy, I'll bet heavy on it. A dandy sport of a fellow, telling them what to do. Say, Frank, what was that we heard the other day in St. Joe about a sport from Chicago being down there doing fancy shooting, sparring in a match with a crack nigger giant, and amusing himself in a general way without telling why?"

"There was talk of something of that sort, but I understood that he was from Denver instead of Chicago. They called him Goldy, but his name was Golding."

"That's the man. And he is yonder this minute, I'll gamble heavy on it."

Frank James took the glass from the hand of his brother. It was then that the special began to move backward, away from the train which was then thundering down upon it with terrible speed.

Meanwhile, the orders of Golding were being obeyed without question. From the rear end of the special he saw two women alight, one, who seemed to be feeble, assisted by the other.

"What!—women on board this train?" exclaimed Golding.

"They are the wife and daughter of Major Sutherland, president of the Gilt-Edge Mining Company. The wife has been in Colorado for her health, but the major sent for them to come back to St. Joe."

It was Bagley who made this answer. He saw a strange look come into the eyes of Goldy, while the latter muttered something to himself.

The ladies were the last to alight from the train, and as soon as they were fairly off, the last move in obedience to Golding's orders was made. The locomotive began to move backward, with the hand of the engineer still on the lever. The fireman would not leave his post until his mate was ready.

The speed of the train was momentarily accelerated. While the other which was advancing was going at a high rate, it was evident that its speed was not likely to increase any. It was an up grade, and there was no one to feed the furnace, nor had the steam been quite up to the standard one hundred and twenty pounds when the engine left the station.

"Good!" exclaimed Bagley. "Graves is going to try saving his engine by sticking."

"So much the better, if he does it. Better yet if he can pull back here and take care of the passengers. How many men have you on board?"

"About thirty."

"Goldbugs and tenderfeet?"

"Yes. But they have got guns, and most of 'em can shoot."

"They will need them. Look yonder."

Bagley looked.

In the direction of the depot, where a moment before there had not been the glimmer of a single light, there now gleamed a score. That was not all. Horsemen were riding up, and there were yells of greeting. Then the darkness sparkled with the discharge of Winchesters and revolvers, and the reports crackled against the wall of forest beyond, and reverberated along the ravine above.

"We're in for it," said Golding. He stopped to pluck an imaginary speck off the sleeve of his coat, and put one hand up to his neckscarf, as if it were important to have these things in order before going into a fight.

"First," he added, "the women must be looked after. The air will be full of bullets here in a moment and they must be protected."

"You see to them, Golding."

"No, no!"

The voice of the eccentric man sounded hoarse. The mention of the women seemed to agitate him more than the prospect of a fight to the death with the most murderous bandit chief in Christendom.

Yet he ran back among the passengers, who stood in a group, waiting to be told what to do.

"Who among you, gentlemen, attended to the ladies during the journey from Denver?"

A middle-aged man of dignified appearance stepped forward. He held a Winchester, but like one who would not know what to do with it if occasion called for its use.

"Major Sutherland advised them to put themselves under my protection during the railway journey," he said.

"He did advise it, eh! Then the major knows you?"

"The management of some of his mining interests was given to me."

"Your name?"

"Eric Harrington."

Golding's eyes searched the man's face briefly, and then shifted to the faces of the others in the group, who were engaged in an excited discussion of the situation. Goldy had observed that Mr. Harrington had not joined in the general confab.

The faces thus dimly revealed to the keen gaze of Golding were, without exception, those of shrewd, successful men of business. Eric Harrington had a suavity of bearing which was unlike that of the others. Besides, his eyes seemed reluctant to meet those of the man who questioned him.

Without hesitation Golding touched one of the youngest men in the party, saying:

"You probably don't recognize me, but I saw you in the city of Denver a year ago. You are Mr. Richard Durling, mining expert, and they call you Dick Durling. Up in the mines they say you are 'white,' and the general reputation counts for a good deal with me. I want you to look after the two ladies who have just alighted from your train—Mrs. Sutherland and Agnes—I should have said, Mrs. Sutherland's daughter. Take them out of the way of the flying bullets, and see them safe through this infernal business. May I depend on you?"

"Yes—only I wished to take a hand in the shooting," was the frank response.

"There'll be more glory in the part I've elected you to play."

"But Harrington, here, has been their guardian since leaving Denver."

"Don't you know, Mr. Durling, that Harrington is a snide?"

The words were not spoken cautiously. Golding evidently meant that the object should hear them.

Harrington leaped back with a fierce oath, and in a flash he had pulled a revolver, all his awkwardness of handling a weapon having disappeared.

But, quick as he had been, it was no use, for he was covered, and the man called the dandy sport held the other's life under the weight of his finger.

"Up with your dukes, Harrington!" was the command.

"I appeal to you, gentlemen——"

"No time to appeal—up with the dukes! Yonder come Jesse James and thirty of the worst devils out of Hades."

Harrington's hands went up, his weapons falling to the ground. One or two of the party, not knowing

Goldy and momentarily suspicious of him, made a move as if they would interfere. But Durling spoke the right word, and it appeared that Harrington had been unpopular all along.

The man was stripped of his weapons in a second, and then run across the track, just behind the "ghost train" as the latter passed in pursuit of the special.

"If you show up again while I'm about," said Goldy, "you lose your layout, with no show to start a new game—mind that."

Durling had lost no time in attending to the women, who, appalled by the swift rush of events, the excited aspect of their traveling companions and the increasing din from the oncoming outlaws, did not know which way to turn.

As Durling approached and quietly told them that he would try and conduct them to a place of safety, Mrs. Sutherland inquired for Harrington.

"If you have need of him we'll fetch him around," said Durling, evasively. "Mr. Golding asked me to see to your safety, and he appears to know what he is about."

"Mr. Golding!" murmured Agnes Sutherland.

"They know each other, and there is a bit of a mystery in the affair," was Durling's thought, as he hurried them over the uneven ground toward a point of shelter.

Golding assumed the leadership of the passengers.

"This way, to cover, or they'll cut you to pieces the moment they get within close range. Hide like gophers—it is your only show. Graves is saving your train, and you have only your lives and purses to look out for. Don't get rattled; hide all the lead in 'em you can. We'll rendezvous at the station when the picnic is over—what there are left of us."

The last part of his speech was not for their ears.

Bang—bang—bang! rattled Winchesters and small arms on every side. Goldy fell face downward in the midst of the plunging horses and yelling riders.

CHAPTER V.

JESSIE JAMES BROUGHT TO TERMS.

For once, Jesse James did not lead the attack.

The bandit king was a man of nerve, but he was more than that. There are pinches where the stoutest hearts will not match the odds against them. A stout heart may be stopped by a miserable ounce of lead.

Craft was one of Jesse James' chief reliances under certain conditions, and there were more times when that quality, coupled with pure bluff, won out in his wonderful career than is generally supposed.

His brother Frank rode at the head of the yelling host, and he was leader enough, for in desperate fighting mettle he was hardly the inferior of his younger brother.

The ground at a little distance from the railroad track was very uneven. The horsemen clattered over it at a furious pace.

Golding had retreated from the immediate proximity of the track, and when he fell, as it looked, almost under the flying hoofs, it was not because he was shot, or intended to commit suicide. Goldy was not a fool.

The instant he fell he rolled over and over down a steep ditch, bringing up in a deep hollow filled with dead brush which had been thrown hither by section men along the track.

It may be said that Goldy did this with much risk to his dainty attire, and he thought of that, caring more for its disarrangement than he did for the scratches on face and hands.

The outlaws dashed past him, avoiding the hollow, which meant broken legs for a horse if stumbled into.

Goldy was up so that he could see them, as distinctly as anything could be seen in the scanty and fitful light emitted by the discharge of guns. He had a revolver in his hand, and it would have been easy to have picked off one or two of them, had that been his purpose.

But he was in a mood to be satisfied with nothing save the biggest game in the pack.

Jesse James and Cole Younger rode in the rear. The former was falling behind his companion, and it could be seen that his keen glance shifted from side to side. He was looking for Golding, whom he had been observing, as well as possible, with his night glass since he had first gained sight of him.

Up from the thicket in the hollow spurted a jet of flame. Cole Younger pitched forward, but his foot caught in the stirrup and the terrified horse dashed away into the darkness with a dangling burden.

Bang—bang! One shot from the concealed man in the hollow, the other from the bandit king. The horse had seen Goldy first, however, and shied in time to save his master's life. It was another piece

of good luck for Jesse James—no more and no less than that.

The same movement of the horse diverted the aim of the desperado, and, possibly, so saved the life of Golding.

But it did not end the encounter.

The wary leader of the outlaws understood that he had no common foe to cope with.

Jesse James was afraid of no man who stood in the least fear of him. But one who did not shrink from inviting an encounter was the sort whom he would rather meet only when the advantage was all on his own side.

He had thought that by riding in the rear of his band he would be able to take his unknown foe by surprise. Instead, he was surprised himself, and he pulled his horse to one side to avoid the expected second shot from Goldy. In this, too, he was lucky, for the second shot came, true as a die, and but for the vest of mail which the outlaw unquestionably wore, his career would have ended then.

The shot, intended for his neck, struck under his shoulder instead, owing to the simultaneous leap of his horse.

Up went the bandit's Winchester. Too late!—the target had changed its position, and before Jesse could work in a shot from his revolver the form of Golding shot up out of the hollow and the smaller weapon and larger as well were knocked from his grasp.

More than once had it been said that Jesse James either bore a charmed life, so that lead or steel could not harm, else some unseen force kept his foes from shooting when opportunity was presented.

At this critical moment it would seem that Goldy might have pushed a leaden messenger straight into one of the outlaws gleaming eyes, for ordinarily he would not have missed the same mark at thirty paces—yet, as he would have fired one foot tripped on the uneven ground and the shot flew lower than the mark.

The outlaw was touched on the hip, and weakened by the sickening grind of lead against the bone.

Golding recovered himself and caught the bandit's leg, tore his foot from the stirrup and tumbled the chief from his horse.

A furious oath burst from the lips of Jesse James. With a painful, though not serious, hurt, and par-

tially disarmed, he nevertheless was nearly a match for his assailant.

"Curse you, whoever you are!" he roared.

By a frantic effort he would have hurled Golding back to the bottom of the hollow. But the lithe form of his antagonist seemed to twine itself about him like a constrictor, and both rolled over and over in a grapple like that of tigers.

But of course Goldy held the advantage. Yet everything did not go his way even then. As he would have ended the desperado's life by another shot he found that the last cartridge in the cylinder had been discharged. His knife had slipped from his belt in the struggle.

These conditions were unknown to Jesse James, and he wondered why his mysterious foe spared him. A cold sweat came out on the bandit's brow. Was he to be taken alive, after all his oaths that he would never yield to bonds or death by noose or bullet in captivity?

"Curse you!" he hissed again.

"You're mine, I reckon, Jesse," came smoothly from the lips of the stranger.

The desperado ceased to struggle. Not by any means because he had given up, however. He believed that the other intended to take him alive and so win the greater reward which would be paid under those conditions. And he thought by appearing to yield to have one more chance to escape or to strike.

"Give it up?" queried Goldy, without relaxing his grip an iota.

"You seem to have me foul, you devil!"

"I asked if you gave up?"

"And if I say yes?"

"Say it, and you will then learn the conditions."

"Who are you? I was never downed like this before."

"If I told you, you wouldn't know any better. We're not old enemies, Jesse—at least, you never had the drop on me, in any way. I might have shot you through the brain to-night as you were talking with the station master. I observed you at my leisure, and when you got the glimpse of me and fired, I didn't care. I come from Denver, and I have staked a great deal to get a straight word with you. There were other ways of getting it, but they would have been underhanded—I should have had to appear to be something that I am not, and to tell straight-out lies. I never did that yet, not even to a

son of Satan like you. It has been said that you have some sense of honor, Jesse James."

"Try me and see," muttered the outlaw, with singular eagerness.

"And if it should turn out that you have none I would be the loser. That won't go."

"I never broke a solemn pledge," said the outlaw, with a dignity which was genuine.

"Did you ever make one that you cared afterward to break?"

The other was silent.

"Let me send a bullet to your brain now, as you lie under my hand, and a fortune is mine," said Golding, deliberately.

"But it would be a coward's way of earning it!" gritted Jesse James.

"I might even let you get on to your feet, place your revolver in your hand, and then win out, shot for shot."

"Try it!"

"No."

"You are in a good position to make boasts of what you could do."

"I am in a position to dictate my own terms, and I am going to do it. But I reckon I can't afford to dally with you here. Your comrades will miss their leader and come back to see what has become of him. Let me hand you over alive to any sheriff or constable in this or any other State of this part of the country and I would have a bigger fortune than I would get by blowing out your brains."

"And so you want me to make you a money pledge upon condition that you let me go?" cried the bandit chief, with sudden exultation.

"That, for telling me so!"

"That" was a slap on Jesse James' left cheek with Goldy's open palm.

It was not a sharp one—the direct sting of it was slight—but from the lips of the outlaw it brought such a flood of oaths as Jack Golding had never heard before in his life.

At the same time a flush overspread the cheeks of Goldy—a flush of mingled anger and shame.

"Forgive me!" he hoarsely muttered.

"Never!"

"Wait—hear what I have to say, first. You think I have spared your life so far to-night that I might win the greater reward which has been offered for

you alive. That is not entirely so. I may spare you because I partly promised to do so."

"You promised it? I don't believe it."

"I'll prove it. Jesse James, you have a wife in Missouri."

"Well."

"And a sweetheart in Denver!"

"My God!"

The face of the bandit king was as white as a sheet—even in the gloom that enshrouded the spot Goldy could see that. And the man was trembling like an aspen—something which he did not do when he thought his life hung by a hair.

"Now what have you to say?" asked Goldy.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FLIGHT FROM BEAVER RUN.

Jesse James did not speak, but he breathed like a man who is in mortal pain.

"Come, we must talk fast. Nell Clayton, recently in Denver——"

"Isn't she there now?"

"I am not answering questions. What I started to say was, that Nell Clayton, recently of Denver, commissioned me to get from you certain papers which she says you never leave at home—that you always carry them upon your person when away from home. You know what I mean."

"What do you want of them?"

"To hand them over to their owner."

"Why did she wish you to do that?"

"I wished it. She granted the favor out of gratitude to me."

"Out of gratitude to you, eh. So she is your sweetheart as well as mine, curse her!"

"No. She is true to you—more's the pity. She doesn't even know that you have a wife, and I hadn't the heart to tell her. But about the papers—I must have them."

"They are not here."

"Where are they? She said that you never parted with them, even for a day, just because her name was on them."

"So much she doesn't know. I wouldn't risk carrying them everywhere."

"Where are they then?"

"Thirty miles from here, hidden so that no man could find them without help."

"That is unlucky for you, Jesse James!" said Goldy, as he quickly pulled a revolver and pressed the muzzle against the outlaw's temple.

Not a quiver shook the bandit's form—not even a muscle of his face twitched.

"Let her go," he said. Better that than a noose. I have said that I would never yield to a man, but I didn't say I would not give up to a devil—and you are one, I believe."

"When I struck you just now, I forgot that you were not in a position to seek satisfaction in an honorable way, with guns at any number of paces. You intimated that I meant to accept a bribe to set you free, and that I would not do. A million of gold would not save you—ten millions would not. Those papers given into my hand will give you a fighting chance, and that is all."

"How is that?"

"Hand them over to me, and I will let you up now without a weapon, but with a three-minute chance to get out of my way."

"But I can't do that if they are not here. It might be that I would bargain to tell you where to find them."

"That will not help you any, for you are not to be trusted. You might tell me where to find them, and tell it true, but you would manage to get to them before I did and get them. No, I promised Nell Clayton that I would get the papers and spare your life if I possibly could do so while I had you at my mercy. I have fulfilled my pledge to her, and there is no other reason why such a wretch as you should be allowed to live. Hark!—some of your men are returning. I won't take the risk of trying to turn you over to the authorities alive, for you might manage to give me or them the slip, since luck is usually on your side. Your time has come, Jesse James!"

"Stay," growled the outlaw. "I have the papers. But how do I know that you will not break your word when they are in your hands?"

"Because, if I meant to shoot you anyway I should not have wasted all this breath on you. I might have blown out your brains and taken the papers afterward, with whatever besides you may have with you. My pledge to Nell Clayton gives you the chance, and that pledge was given to gain of her the fact that the writings were in your possession. Can't you see that I must be acting in good faith, and that

you don't even have to risk anything that is yours, since your life is in my keeping anyway?"

Nearer came the approaching horsemen. Jesse James was merely trying to gain time. The cold ring against his temple pressed harder.

"I will count three—then you go!"

Goldy wished to see the papers before he gave the outlaw the promised chance for his life, for it might be that those which should be given would not be the genuine which he sought.

Jesse James thrust a hand into his hunting shirt and drew out a packet. Goldy, without relinquishing his advantage, struck a match and said:

"Unfold the larger one so that I may see the face of it."

The bandit complied. A glance showed that it had a large seal at the bottom—that it was a certificate of ownership in the Gilt-Edge Mining Company, representing many thousand dollars in value. The transfer was made in the name of Nellie Clayton, in favor of Agnes Sutherland. There were also the names of witnesses, which Goldy did not stop then to examine.

They were what he had taken so much risk to obtain, of this there could be no doubt.

He stowed them away safely. He was for the moment partially off his guard, and he believed Jesse James to be more completely disabled than was the fact.

With one powerful arm free, the bandit king struck a quick, powerful blow that sent Golding reeling. Before he could recover himself the outlaw had released his other arm and regained his feet.

At the same time the shadowy forms of several horsemen became visible, and once more there was a cracking of revolvers and banging of Winchesters close at hand.

As has been stated, Golding's revolver had an empty cylinder. He was on his feet, his head dizzy from the blow that Jesse James had given him. To avoid an expected shot Goldy was compelled to beat a temporary retreat.

The darkness sheltered him, and not knowing that Golding's revolver was useless for the moment, the outlaw was careful to avoid a shot at close quarters. At the same time the bandit pulled a weapon and blazed away at his adversary.

But the latter was in motion, and in the darkness

only a confused glimpse of Goldy's form was obtainable.

Jesse James uttered a signaling shout to his comrades, many of whom were approaching the spot at the moment.

Then there followed a swift and thorough search of the entire locality for Golding.

But it was a vain one.

The mysterious stranger had disappeared as completely as though the earth had swallowed him.

Meanwhile, in following the instructions of Goldy the passengers of the special had made a successful defense of their lives and purses.

Two had been killed, and two others had been forced to surrender what valuables they had on their persons. The others had managed to elude the search of the outlaws in the darkness, and by hiding among the rocks and trees.

The truth was the quest for them was only a half-hearted one on the part of the bandits when it was realized that there was no chance of capturing what was believed to be the richer treasure on board the train.

That was not all. Graves, the engineer, had not only succeeded in running away from the wild train which had been sent to wreck the special, but had kept on to the next station to give the alarm and raise a posse to come to the rescue of the passengers. This Frank James and the other leading spirits of the outlaws suspected, and it was decided that it was time to scatter their forces and retreat for safety.

An hour later Jesse and Frank James were riding side by side, having been left in the rear by the more precipitate flight of their comrades.

For a time hardly a word was exchanged. Frank knew that his brother had met with a reverse or humiliation of some sort, and he knew the younger man too well to question him.

"We euchred the latest scheme to clean us out besides making one good haul to-night," was the remark with which Frank broke the long silence.

"I would give all if I could but get the drop on one man at this moment," returned the brother, with a sudden excitement of manner which he was seldom seen to display.

"Golding?" suggested Frank.

A fierce oath was the answer. Then, after another pause Jesse spoke again:

"You have heard more about that man than you have told me. Tell me the rest of it."

"I have heard but little, and that little was mere gossip. He was in St. Joe and cut quite a figure as a high roller. A regular sport, afraid of nothing, ready to fight with dukes or guns, dead game at poker, and always dressed to kill. The women went wild over him at a dance, where he rolled around as the only pebble. I was in town at the time, but for good reasons I was in disguise, and rather modest at that. I saw him, I suppose, and that was about all."

"But what is his real lay? Gossip or gospel, I want the whole of it."

"Some thought he belonged to the James boys gang," grinned Frank.

"If he really did our name would soon be forgotten, and it would get to be called the Goldy Gang instead."

"You think he's game?"

"No matter what I think—both of us can't live in the same part of the country. What else did you hear?"

"The same old gag that goes about every crank that strikes a town and behaves different from the rest of the crowd—some think that sort are always detectives."

"In the case of Golding they may be right, though I reckon it may be on his own account. Say, Frank!"

"Let her go, Jesse."

"I would at this minute give every dollar of the treasure that I have *cached* for a fair chance to kill Golding. That is the word—I want to kill him, I don't care how, only I want to do it myself. If you get the drop on the devil, don't use it, but save him for me."

"He is your meat, Jess."

"Or I'm his—as it may happen to turn out. One thing, counting him out of the game altogether, we will have a hornets' nest about our ears right off on account of our clean-out of the 'ghost train' to-night. Raines was a popular and gamey leader of deputies, in the employment of the railroad company, of private capitalists of the State, and I don't know how many more. For a time we will have to keep to cover, and what we do can't be done as a gang. We couldn't scrape together a dozen men who would follow us into a raid for the next month or more. As for Cole Younger, I'm afraid he has passed in his

checks. You haven't seen him since the last part of the fight, have you?"

"No."

On rode the brothers in silence, penetrating deep into the rugged wilds of that region—Frank thinking of a private ambition, and Jesse with a heart hot for vengeance against Goldy, the dandy sport from Denver.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GREETING FROM SUTHERLAND'S RANCH.

Graves returned with his train in two hours, and he brought with him a deputy sheriff and armed posse, eager to give battle to the James boys' gang, for gore or glory.

Of course they won neither. Butchy, the station agent, was alive, but with a head badly swollen from the clip he had received at the hands of Jesse. He got some glory out of it, by enlarging on his adventure with the unconquerable bandit king. It was worth something just to have been knocked down by the renowned Jesse James.

The "ghost train" ran wild, but at a lagging pace, to the next station, where it was easily boarded and brought to a standstill, thanks to the steep grade it had to climb without a fireman to stoke fresh fuel.

There were only two men found alive on the ill-fated train. They were one of the disciplined deputies in the paneled car and Quelton; the former seriously wounded and the latter helplessly bound, and overwhelmed in spirits by the death of Raines and defeat of their cherished project.

When Graves arrived with his rescuing party at Beaver Run he blew a prolonged signal. Slowly, one by one, the passengers who were in hiding came forth from their burrows.

Durling, with Mrs. Sutherland and Agnes, were among the first to put in an appearance.

Immediate inquiry was made for the mysterious stranger who had warned them of their peril, and so actually saved them from death and robbery. But no one had seen him since the beginning of the encounter.

"I feel more anxious about Mr. Harrington, who has been so kindly attentive to us during our journey from Denver," was Mrs. Sutherland's remark to Durling.

The latter shrugged his shoulders.

"I wouldn't worry about him if I were you."

"But Major Sutherland enjoined us to depend upon him for everything."

"Strikes me he would be rather a poor dependence when he can't be found at the time he is most wanted."

"It seems like that to me," ventured Miss Sutherland.

"It is hard to say what our fate would have been but for the man called Golding, who warned us of the intended attack, and who ordered every detail of our flight and defense," said Durling.

"Goldy is the best trump in the whole deck—he beats both bowers and the joker," said Bagley, the conductor, who chanced along at that moment.

Agnes raised her beautiful eyes to the speaker's face. There was something like a look of scorn in them as she replied:

"You are a friend of Mr. Golding's, it seems?"

"For the best of reasons, Miss Sutherland."

"You have seen him before to-night?"

"Yes."

"In Denver?"

"Yes."

"In St. Joseph also, perhaps?"

"In St. Joseph, and in one or two other towns. He cut a figure in the mining regions a year or two ago, made a fortune, lost or gave it away—according to who tells the story—and has done many a man a good turn without saying a word about himself."

"A nice record, to be sure," and the scorn in the tones of the girl was more marked than before.

"But unfortunately, there are those who could present another side to the picture."

Durling, Bagley and others, drawn about the fair speaker by the evidence of interest in the discussion, exchanged looks of intense wonderment and curiosity.

"Then you know something of this Golding?" exclaimed Durling.

"I know that he is a cheat and a gambler, who ruined one of the best men who ever lived!" she said.

"I would never have thought it. I knew he was handy with the pasteboards, but I took it that it was just a sport or pastime with him, and that he would rather lose a stake than win one except by fair play."

"What I have said I know to be true. Nor is that all. Before this train left the station at Denver, when we first found our seats, and while Mr. Har-

rington was out attending to our baggage, I found a slip of paper lying on the floor of the car right at my feet. It was badly soiled with the marks of boot-heels on it, as if it had lain there some time, having been overlooked when the car was swept out. Out of idle curiosity I picked it up, and, of course read what was written on the other side of the slip."

As she spoke, Miss Sutherland took the scrap of paper from her purse and handed it to Durling.

"Pass it around among the friends of Mr. Golding, the 'dandy sport,' as he seems to delight in being called."

"Heavens!" ejaculated Durling.

There were some who muttered yet more emphatic epithets as their eyes took in the words and significance of the writing.

It bore no date, was poorly scrawled, but correctly spelled, and was as follows:

We'll respect your orders regarding the business at Beaver Run, if we are able to carry out the rest of the programme. The "ghost" is ours. There'll be a rush made for the "spesh," and you will have a show in the line of saving the train from the bad men, and what gratitude you get from the women passengers will go to pay for your favors in the way of tips about the shipping of treasure.

J. J.

Of those who read the note there was not one who failed in his mind to identify the writer of it as Jesse James. And who had carried out the programme of "rescue" except Golding, the "dandy sport?" Therefore, had not the message been sent to Goldy, on some recent date, and lost by the recipient?

There might have been some general doubt about it had Miss Sutherland not furnished testimony as to what she had reason to believe was the real character of the mysterious stranger.

In the midst of the comments on the writing, with the expressions of indignation against Goldy's double-play, another person entered the car.

It was Eric Harrington, and he cast an angry glance at Durling as he said:

"If you have no objections, sir, I will resume the charge from which you helped that sporty stranger to oust me a short time ago. My reckoning with him will come when he faces me with a fair show, as will be the case some time."

Durling did not know what to say.

He and Bagley, the conductor, were the only ones on the train by this time who did not credit the black evidence against Golding.

Bagley was silenced, but he still felt that something might be said in defense of the nervy fellow whose record, as he had heard it, was a white one.

Durling was in doubt. But the speech of Harrington helped Golding in his estimation.

At the next station, a little after daylight, a telegram was received from Major Sutherland, requesting his wife and daughter to stop there and await his arrival, with a carriage, as he had just been called out to their ranch by a message from the manager of the estate.

Mr. Harrington affected great surprise and disappointment that he was so soon to be deprived of escort duty.

"I really feel that I ought to wait here and see that you are safe under the major's protection before I allow you to leave my sight," he declared.

"I would not trouble you so far," protested Mrs. Sutherland.

"I shall insist, for I do not feel that I have been relieved of the trust. Besides, I wish to see the major, and, as he is at his ranch, instead of at St. Joseph, I should miss him if I went on."

Durling was near enough to hear this speech. The truth was, the younger man had found Miss Agnes very agreeable, and he was inclined to favor the judgment of Golding when the latter had called Harrington a snide.

But there seemed to be no pretext that would allow Durling to demand the right to share in escort duty, and he was compelled, reluctantly, to see the ladies leave the train in company with the sleek and oily Mr. Harrington.

The station was in the heart of a thrifty farming town. Major Sutherland's ranch was situated about a dozen miles out. It had been a thrifty estate, but, owing to reverses in fortune, the owner had allowed it to run down for some time.

Major Sutherland's one great fault was that he could not resist the temptation to put up big stakes at poker. In this he was notorious, and in that locality nobody would play against him.

But it was whispered that he had been cleaned out in that and similar games in Colorado by the cool sharpers of that region. Of the matter he could never be led to speak to either his wife or daughter, but the latter had been informed upon good authority that in her father's fatal losses Golding had been the winner.

Just as the train left the station, and as the ladies were conducted to the waiting-room by Harrington, a carriage drawn by a pair of high steppers came dashing up to the rear of the depot.

Harrington hastened out, just as the driver of the turnout jumped from the seat. Instantly the man thrust out a big, red paw and leered down into the sleek countenance of the gentleman from Denver.

"Well, old hoss, ef ye ain't fixed up like a durned mule that's jest drawed the corpus to a nigger funeral!" roared the driver in greeting.

"Shut up, curse you, or I'll blow the top of your head off!"

As the gentleman spoke he caused the muzzle of a revolver to peep out from underneath his waistcoat.

But the driver only roared the louder.

"Durn me for an ornery buzzard, Rick Hamblin, ef ye ain't spreadin' it on a leetle too thick! Do ye reckon that I'm ther hoss ter sheer out fer a pop-gun of thet ere caylyber? But, say, Rick, where air the petticoats? Waltz 'em right out and pile 'em inter the hearse."

"For God's sake, hush!" gasped the other.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE JAMES BOYS' STILL HUNT.

While to one observing all of the circumstances there could be little doubt that the sleek man from Denver calling himself Eric Harrington was playing a double game, as yet Mrs. Sutherland and Agnes were successfully deceived by the rather slim explanations which the man made of all questionable appearances.

While they were being driven out to the Sutherland ranch by the rough driver—who was a stranger to them—and so being decoyed into a trap which they little dreamed of, events were ripening in another quarter which was to have a bearing on their situation.

Little suspected by Major Sutherland when he had bought the ranch, the most secret retreat of the James boys was situated within a few miles of the estate. And it was to that retreat that the bandit brothers made their way after their capture of the treasure on the "ghost train."

Usually Frank and Jesse worked harmoniously together. Yet each had his secrets and his ambitions,

like other men, both good and evil. Frank did not know or suspect the existence of his brother's sweetheart in the city of Denver. And, on the other hand, Frank had a scheme of his own which he had not mentioned to Jesse.

The brothers had been in Denver while Mrs. Sutherland and her daughter were in the city, and, as they were in disguise, it had chanced that they had seen the mother and daughter upon several occasions.

A slight accident had happened to a vehicle when the ladies were riding on the outskirts of the city, and Frank James, as gentlemanly as any one when it suited his purpose to be so, had come to their relief, repairing the break in the harness, and seeing them safely on their way again.

Frank was not usually much impressed by feminine beauty, but Agnes Sutherland's face and smile had haunted him constantly from that hour.

Hearing that the ladies were on the special train which they had attempted to raid with such ill success, he determined to see and obtain an interview with Agnes upon some pretext.

The James boys for the time sought seclusion in a stanch cabin, which had been built many years before by a runaway negro, and afterward used by others of his kind as a hiding-place. It was located in a narrow ravine, overhung by a tangle of trees and climbers, and almost entirely shut in by rocks. It was built mostly of stone, and was in part formed by a shallow, natural cave. A deeper excavation had been made artificially, and, as to the secrets of the interior, no one except Jesse and Frank James at that time knew.

At the hour just before sunset of the fourth day after the hold-up and robbery of the "ghost," or decoy, train, two plainly-clad, farmer-looking men drove in a cart along the little-used road that led past the Sutherland ranch.

This same road, if followed in the direction from which the homely team was driven, would have led a searcher quite near to the entrance of the ravine alluded to.

The honest-looking farmers were no other than Jesse and Frank James. Their disguises were clever, and they were such good actors that only the shrewdest of observers would have suspected that they were not what they seemed to be.

"You say Rick Hamblin is out at the Sutherland

ranch, Frank?" Jesse remarked, breaking a long silence.

"I'm dead sure of it, Jess."

"What can he be up to out here? I reckoned he would find it for his health to stay in Denver, after playing at bandit under my instructions, and then playing at detective just to toady to the authorities, and trying for a dead give-away of my latest plans. Curse him for a double-faced sneak and coward!"

Frank did not betray so much heat over the matter as did his brother. The truth was, things were working so much to his own mind that he could not appear very much out of humor.

"He has worked into the major's confidence, and has been trying, I reckon, to make up to the major's daughter."

"And is the major here at the ranch?"

"I don't think he is. Which shows that he is playing false in that quarter. I heard some talk at the railroad station yesterday, and, while nobody seems to suspect anything, I'm pretty sure that he decoyed the women out to the ranch, and that he will light out with the girl one of these fine evenings. Rick Hamblin would never act on the square with any living man or woman."

"That's right, Frank. And if he is here to-night I don't mind running a little risk of being spotted for the chance of having it out with the sleek devil."

"And, Jess, what's the matter with my taking the girl under my protection?"

"Better keep out of the girl business, Frank."

"We're having a run of good luck just now, and it is a good time to scoop as big a pot as we can while we hold a flush."

"It is none of my affair. But women will turn a man's luck no matter how straight it may seem to be running. They will beat the best hand a man ever held with just the ace of hearts."

"You don't always take your own advice, Jess."

"I take my own consequences, anyhow!" snapped the bandit chief. And then he relapsed into a silence from which he would not let his companion arouse him until they were within sight of the lights from the ranch.

Then he said:

"I have an idea that Goldy, that Denver dandy, is hanging about here. It has been a wonder to me that nothing has been heard of him since the night of our last raid. He has some papers——"

Jesse interrupted himself, shutting his stern lips tight.

"What papers, Jess?"

"Curl papers on his hair, I reckon," snapped Jesse. And that stopped the questions.

Near the buildings of the ranch there was a grove of primeval trees. As the brothers rode through them a form rose at the roadside, close to the wagon. That the unknown lived to draw another breath was due to the reluctance of the James brothers to giving an alarm at the ranch. Beth covered him with their revolvers.

"Easy, pardners," said the other, in a husky voice.

"Cole Younger!" uttered the brothers in the same breath.

"Right—what there is left of him. About all of the claret is run out of me, though, and I have to drag myself around like a snail. You know, Jess, when we were riding up to attack the crowd from the special——"

"Go light on that talk here, Cole. Because you happen to know our makeup doesn't signify that we want you to tell everybody the secret. It seems you aren't dead, and that is enough of the yarn here. What is the lay? Why did you come here as soon as you could crawl?"

"To find the devil who came nigh to shooting the life out of me."

"Golding?" asked Jesse, under his breath.

"Yes. I have been laying for him as patient as a cat watches for a rat to come out of its hole. And here he is, sneaking round the house yonder this very night."

Jesse James shrugged his shoulders. In spite of his unfailing nerve, he could not think of being in such close proximity to the only man who had ever so fairly had his life in hand without a slight qualm—perhaps we should not say of fear, for Jesse James was not the man to shrink from death when the last call should come.

But he had a feeling that the crisis of his life was at hand. If there was his equal in coolness and resource in the Southwest, then the man called "Goldy, the dandy sport, from Denver" was that equal.

"I reckon we are running up against something as hot as it would be to raid a whole town, and probably without an ounce of boodle in it," he muttered.

"I want the neck of that devil under my fingers!" growled Younger.

"It isn't likely you will get it there, Cole."

"Why not, if you stand by me?"

"Because I'm for sending a bullet to his brain if I get the drop, without waiting for any of your foolery in the way of vengeance. That man isn't the sort to be monkeyed with, as if he was a common deputy."

"Take me into your wagon, can't ye? I'm weak with dragging myself. He jest missed my jugular, and shooting in the dark at that. I've bled a hogs-head."

"Get in, but keep shady, and don't talk. Just answer questions, that's all. Do you know that Golding is here to-night?"

"I seen him."

"Why, in the name of all the fiends, didn't you shoot him then?"

"'Cause my hands are pretty nigh being paralyzed with the lead that grazed the top of my spine. Sometimes there aren't no more feeling in 'em than as if they wa'n't hitched on to me."

"Lie low, then, if there is a fight. Where was he when you glimpsed him?"

"Standing up there on the porch, cool as if he was the house dog."

"He is mine!" muttered Jesse James.

They drove on until they came opposite to the front entrance of the house. They could faintly see the shadowy outlines of a man standing on the porch, as if waiting for the door to open.

As upon another recent occasion of which note has been taken, Jesse James brought his night glass into requisition.

At that moment the door opened, and he plainly saw that it was Rick Hamblin, *alias* Eric Harrington, who stood inside.

The one confronting him was Goldy!

He was covered by the revolver of Jesse James. But at the same instant there appeared another form in the doorway, exactly in range. It was Agnes Sutherland.

To have shot Golding then would have almost surely ended the life of the girl with the same bullet. Jesse's hand was stayed by that of his brother.

CHAPTER IX.

AT THE RANCH.

Affairs at the Sutherland ranch looked squally. When Rick Hamblin found himself confronted by the man who had called him a snide in presence of the other passengers of the special, he recoiled as if he had seen a ghost.

But he was too old a villain to give up a grip that he had worked so hard to obtain.

He whipped out a revolver, and—bang!

Bullets are quick, but it almost seemed as if Golding was quicker even than they. His left hand caught the wrist of Hamblin just as the latter fired, and the shot hissed past his cheek and plugged a tree in the yard. That was all the shooting Hamblin found time to do just then, for the reason that Golding sent the revolver flying off on a trip of its own, while he caught the counterfeit gentleman by the collar and proceeded to wipe up the dusty floor of the porch with him.

At this stage the evolutions of Golding and his victim were so bewildering that neither of the James brothers could have gotten in a shot with any definite idea as to whom it would hit, had they tried.

Besides, Miss Sutherland kept fluttering about the combatants with some idea, probably, of putting an end to the fray. Just who she would have preferred to help might seem a matter of doubt for the moment. But the truth was to be made clear a little later.

Believing as she did that Golding had impoverished her father at the gaming table, it was not to be wondered at that she was strongly prejudiced against him.

Yet, within the last few days, she had come to hate the very sight of Rick Hamblin. The latter had stuck to the ranch night and day, under pretense of an anxiety for her safety. Joplin, the rough pilgrim who had greeted him on their arrival and driven out to the ranch, had played his part well, and kept up a constant alarm with reports that the James boys were hiding in the vicinity, and that there was a plot to rob the ranch.

Meanwhile, Hamblin was openly making love to Agnes, and what had begun as persuasions were becoming more like threats, until she was fairly in terror of the sight of him.

This experience, coupled with her anxiety over the non-arrival of her father at the ranch, rendered even the sight of Golding almost a pleasing one. She began to suspect that, after all, the apparent service he had done in warning the special of the attack of Jesse James might have been genuine.

So much for the situation at the ranch at the moment of the arrival of Golding, and the meditated visit of Frank and Jesse James.

It should not be understood that Golding really had a fight with Rick Hamblin, for there was no fight about it.

The old cheat was merely used as a mop, and for a time it looked as if Goldy would wipe up the whole of the grounds about the house with him before he could be persuaded to let go.

It was such a pretty sight that the James boys, and even Cole Younger, observing it from beyond the

fringe of evergreens in front of the dwelling, looked on with a keen enjoyment. Cole got to laughing, and came near to betraying their proximity by his mirth.

"That Goldy is a corker, ain't he?" he hoarsely whispered.

Jesse James compressed his lips. He did not care to say what he knew about the fighting abilities of the slick young fellow from Denver.

He would several times have ventured a shot at Golding, but for the restraining hand of his brother, who was watchful of the safety of Agnes.

Besides, Frank did not wish to have their own real identity betrayed to the Sutherlands until he had had a chance to try his arts at love-making with Agnes.

The encounter at the door, though lively, was not a long one. And it ended as suddenly as it began.

Golding gave the man a final fling into some shrubbery, and at the same time stepped in through the open door, where Agnes was standing.

Then—bang!

The hand of Jesse James could be no longer restrained. The shot was fired, but Frank jerked at his brother's arm at the moment, and the bullet struck with a thud in the wainscoting over Golding's head.

Agnes was lifted off her feet as if she were a baby, and carried into the house—and by Goldy. The door was shut and barred, and then a low, reassuring voice spoke to the terrified girl. It was Goldy's voice, and there was music in it, she could not deny.

"Don't be over-alarmed, Miss Sutherland," she heard him say. "It is evident that Hamblin either has confederates outside, else there are other foes about the house—enemies of mine, perhaps, for there are a few people who would like to wind up my record. Where is your mother?"

"She was asleep when you knocked. She is ill with the worry and excitement she has suffered for the past few days. But may I ask why you handled Mr. Harrington so roughly, Mr. Golding?"

"He was so heavy, I had to handle him roughly if I handled him at all."

"This is no time for jesting, Mr. Golding."

"That is what Rick Hamblin thinks, I dare say," smiled Goldy, while he adjusted his neckscarf before a glass, and coolly brushed some dust off his coat.

Agnes could not help smiling. She had never seen a man so cool, so handsome and so keen all at the same time.

"But he is an unscrupulous gambler, and he ruined my poor father," was her thought, with which she braced up her hatred of Mr. Golding.

"Why do you call him Hamblin?" she asked.

"Because that is the name he went by when he was shystering around the mining camps in Colorado a few years ago, and also the same that Jesse James

knew him by while he acted as a spy for the outlaws."

"You don't mean that, Mr. Golding!"

"Ask Jesse James."

"I wouldn't dare to speak to that dreadful desperado."

"It would probably be safe enough under most conditions, though I don't wonder that you are a little fearful. But, really, I came here to-night to do you a service, and I will have to go about it. Did you know that Hamblin laid a snare to catch you in, here at the ranch, and that your father has no knowledge of your presence here?"

"I have suspected that something was wrong, since my father has not appeared. I supposed he would be here awaiting us."

"The whole yarn that Hamblin told you was a fake. Major Sutherland thinks you were unable to come on the train you really took, and that you will not arrive for another week."

"Are you sure of this?"

"He told me so himself, not nine hours ago."

"Then you have seen him?" cried Agnes.

"Yes."

"Then, of course, you told him that we were here?"

"Of course not."

"Why—why——"

"Because Hamblin had a watch set for him, and he would not have lived to see you had he tried to get here. I hastened here to attend to your safety myself, and I hope at the same time to prove to your satisfaction that I have never done either your father or yourself any injury. There is not time now, however, to plead my case, except so far as to persuade you to trust to me for your safety in your present danger. You heard the shot which was fired just now from the direction of the road?"

"Yes."

"That was meant for me. It might have hit you. I fear that Jesse James fired that shot."

"Good heavens!"

"Hark!"

There were the sounds of footsteps outside on the porch. Then there was an imperative knock on the door.

At the same time Joplin came running into the room.

"I say, Rick——" he began. Then he saw that "Rick" was not there, but a dandyfied young fellow instead.

"Holy snakes!" he gasped.

Then he snatched at a revolver, but found that he was a long ways too slow, for the nose of one was looking at him, with Goldy's steady finger holding back the bullet.

"Drop the shooter, Joplin!"

It was dropped.

"Lie down flat."

Joplin stretched himself out on the carpet as stiff as a subject on a dissecting table.

Some handcuffs snapped on to his wrists. Then Goldy turned to Agnes.

"Go to your mother, for there are going to be lively times here, not fit for your eyes. I've got to play a lone hand, and I'll have to lead with my highest or lose."

Without a word, she obeyed him. She no longer felt anything like fear. It seemed to her that Golding could do anything, and fight successfully against any odds.

She was no sooner out of the room than he extinguished the lights. None too soon, for there were shots outside, and the bullets began to shatter the window glass and go "spat-spat" in the wall.

Outside, Frank James was having a hard time of it trying to restrain his brother. Indeed, he found that he could not restrain him at all.

After the shot was fired at Golding before the door was shut, Frank angrily exclaimed:

"You would kill that girl, Jess!"

"I would kill that Denver sport, as I have sworn I would do," was the harsh retort.

"Take a time, then, when she isn't in the same line for your shot."

"I'll send in a shot every time, and any time, that I get a glimpse of the devil."

"I'll not see that girl murdered."

Jesse turned fiercely on his brother. It was not often that the outlaw brothers quarreled, but when there was a clash it was sure to be a warm one.

"What will you do about it, Frank? I don't want to hurt the girl; but if she don't keep out of the way it is not my lookout."

"It is mine. Don't you drop another shot in that direction until the girl is out of the way."

"Girl, girl girl!" sneered Jesse.

"You're as deep in the mud as I am in the mire, Jess, and you know it."

"What?"

"Perhaps you think nobody hereabouts knows that you have a sweetheart somewhere in Colorado."

A fearful oath burst from the lips of Jesse.

"Don't you dare to whisper it, Frank, or, by the dickens, I'll shut your lips in a way that they'll never be opened!"

Upon few occasions had Frank seen Jesse in such a fearful rage. The older man did not lack nerve, but there was a fury in the younger brother which the older could not match or feel. It was that which sometimes carried everything before it, and so won when it would seem there was no chance for winning.

This was the crisis, and really the end of the quarrel.

The fact that Frank James knew or suspected his secret made Jesse more wary. For, to have his wife know of it, would be an outcome which he would little relish.

"I've no idea of giving you away, Jess," said the other, mildly.

"Come, we must trap that Golding, now that we know where he is. He has got girl on the brain, too, and so he will stick to that house until he is sure she is safe. So I have a chance that may not come again in many a day."

"I'm as ready to clean him out as you are, and for good reasons," muttered Frank.

"Come, Cole, if you want a shot at Goldy, lend a hand," said Jesse.

"Didn't I tell you that my hands are pretty nigh paralyzed, and that I couldn't shoot to hit the moon!"

"Afraid to face him, eh?" sneered Jesse.

"Not by a durn sight!"

Younger clambered out of the wagon, groaning as he did so, but spurred on by the taunt of his leader.

They went into the yard of the house, and Frank pounded at the door, anxious to get inside, so as to play the part of rescuer to Miss Sutherland again. In his disguise he believed that it would be easy to do, and that she need never suspect the truth.

Younger, lagging behind his companions, nearly stumbled over the bulky form of Rick Hamblin lying in the grass. The man was grunting in an effort to recover the breath which had been knocked out of him. He caught at Cole's legs, and the latter went down.

"Blast it!" howled the outlaw.

Then he got up and fetched Hamblin a kick that made him roar, and scramble to his feet with more fight in him than there had been before.

The two scuffled for a minute, and were then torn apart by Jesse James.

"Here, enough of this," he said. "Tell me, Rick, who of your old friends you have in there? Don't think I would waste lead on you for an old score, but talk fast, or out go your lights."

CHAPTER X.

GOLDY'S LONE HAND.

Rick was glad enough to tell Jesse what he wished to know, and the rate at which he fawned upon the bandit chief in the effort to regain his good will and confidence was fairly sickening to the object of his demonstrations.

But for the moment it seemed to be best to keep the man's good will, so Jesse refrained from laying him out on the grass with a blow between the eyes, as he felt impelled to do.

Stepping back, while Frank hammered at the door, Jesse began to fire through the window. At the same time the lights went out, and he could not tell whether there was any one in the room to be in danger of the flying bullets or not.

Golding, meanwhile, hastened to barricade the doors as well as it could be done. The house was stanchly built, but he knew it would be easy for the enemy to smash their way in through a window.

To do this, however, would necessitate an exposure of themselves to the fire of the one within, and with his reputation as a shot, Goldy believed that even Jesse James would be chary about giving him a good chance at him.

"He wants awful bad to lay me out," thought Golding; "but he has a respect for me, just the same, and he won't risk my getting the drop if he can help it. He has reason to know that I wouldn't give him another show for his life, as I did before."

Having put the house in the best possible condition for defense, Goldy set about a bit of strategy.

Going upstairs, he opened a window over the porch and crawled out on to the roof.

From there he could look down into the yard. But he could not see up close to the house, and it was too dark everywhere to make out objects with anything like distinctness.

If there had been nothing but his own safety to think of Goldy would have enjoyed nothing better than the sport of fighting and outwitting the bandits, and watching for a chance to wind up the career of Jesse James. To accomplish the last-named feat in a fair fight or by fair strategy, was the kind of victory that Golding coveted. To do this by treachery was remote from his purpose.

The shooting below suddenly ceased, and likewise the clamoring at the door. Yet Golding could plainly hear the foe moving about, and the rumble of their voices also came to his ears.

But for the poor health of Mrs. Sutherland it would have seemed easier to find a way of getting them away from the house, for there were good saddle horses in the stable.

As it was, the prospects did not seem very bright, and Goldy feared that he would have to keep the foe at bay until daylight, or until help should come.

He knew that Jesse James would not risk being caught in that locality after sunrise, for the country all about there was aroused against the bandit brothers and their bloodthirsty gang.

As he crouched and listened, an idea occurred to him.

"It won't be easy to carry out, but I reckon it'll have to go," he decided.

He found his way to the room where Mrs. Sutherland and Agnes sat, clinging to each other, the

girl striving to quiet the apprehensions of her mother.

"It is best for me to get you out of the house, and on your way to the village," he declared. "But at the start I must be assured that you will do exactly as I say, without stopping for questions, objections or doubts. Mrs. Sutherland, I will have to require you to make all the physical effort in your power, as you would do if the house were on fire, and there was only one way of escape. May I rely on you?"

"Yes, yes!" they both eagerly responded. For by this time they were convinced that Golding had their interests and safety at heart.

"Come, then."

They followed him to an upstairs room at the back of the house. He silently opened a window and said:

"Get out on to the flat roof of the shed. I will follow presently."

They complied.

He went back to the roof of the porch, and again took observations. He saw a shadowy form skulking across the yard.

He leveled his revolver. Crack! The form ceased to skulk.

There was an instant outcry, and the sound of hurried footsteps. There were no more moving forms in sight to shoot at, but Golding let his revolver rattle, the bullets going "zip-zip" here and there in the shrubbery. The whole dooryard was a dangerous place just then.

Then Goldy hastened back to his companions.

The distance from the roof of the shed was short, or there was an embankment below, rising above the level ground.

"You will have to let me lower you to the ground, and wait there for me to follow," he said, in a low tone.

They remembered what he had enjoined about raising objections, and they were quick to follow his lightest direction. He lowered the older lady almost by his own strength alone, and did not let go until her feet touched the ground.

He assisted Agnes more quickly, and she dropped lightly at the side of her mother. A second later he was at their side.

"Do not stir," he ordered, and again left them.

He found Jesse and Frank James in the act of entering one of the lower rooms through a window, having smashed the glass. Cole Younger stood outside to keep watch. Out amid the shrubbery Rick Lamblin lay in a silence which would never be broken.

Golding hastened back to the women.

"Follow, Miss Agnes," he whispered. "If we are followed at follow just the same. No matter what happens, follow."

He lifted Mrs. Sutherland in his arms and started at a silent run, by a long detour, around the buildings. He reached the road at a point some distance below the place where the team belonging to the James boys was standing.

He now made his way toward it. When he had nearly reached the horse the latter snorted and tossed his head.

The beast would have started on a runaway had Goldy not dropped his burden and caught at the bridle just in time.

"Get in, quick!" he commanded.

Even the older woman showed ability in the way of agility such as she had not displayed before. Both got in.

Goldy followed.

A yell came from the house, then a bang—the latter from Cole Younger's revolver. But it proved that his claims of finger clumsiness were true enough, for the shot went wide of its mark.

Another, fired by a truer hand through the window, nipped the horse's flank.

"Just the 'thing,'" said Goldy, for it set the horse into the maddest kind of a gallop.

Jesse James would not have started out on any kind of a mission with a slow horse. This animal had the look of an old skate, but it was merely because he was thin. In truth, he had the blood of a long ancestry of racers in his veins, and he pounded the dry road at a rate that made it smoke.

Goldy laid on the whip, and at the same time faced half-way about and sent some shots from the shining little toy of a revolver, just to keep the foe to cover.

From the rear there came a perfect fusillade of shots, from revolvers and Winchesters. But it was too late, for the night was dark, the road crooked, and the mark a flying one.

"Good—good! You have done a brave, wonderful thing!" breathed Agnes Sutherland.

"Just a word about that mining stock that it was said I won from Major Sutherland," said Golding, as they sped along. "I have just placed the papers in the major's hands, with a full explanation. He may not tell you the whole facts, but he will exonerate me, be sure of that."

CHAPTER XI.

THE FINAL FLIGHT.

Leaving the ladies safe in a hotel in the town, Goldy was in time to join a party of cattle and mountain men, who chanced to be in town on a holiday, and who had just made up for a search for Jesse James, and a chase, if they should be so lucky as to strike his trail.

Golding knew that these men were there, and had

intended to give them the pointer they sought, and accompany them if they desired. But a knowledge of the danger of the Sutherland ranch had compelled him to go on alone in advance.

When he told them that the bandit king was even then within a few miles of them, and that he believed they would be in time to track them to their hiding-place, there was a cheer that roared from one end of the town to the other.

They were soon on the road, Golding riding at the head of the cavalcade. He had found a good horse, and rode like mad, setting a pace that taxed the others to their utmost to follow.

They had no idea that they would find the bandit brothers at the ranch, and in this they were not disappointed. The horses in the stable had all been taken, Joplin mounted on one of them, and all had made a wild break for the rugged country that lay beyond.

Golding soon determined that they had not gone toward the secret retreat, where the brothers had been hiding since the last railroad raid. Therefore it became a wild chase, farther and farther into the wilds, where rocky hills, tangled forest, gloomy ravines and devious paths abounded.

Some of the pursuers abandoned their horses, and Golding was one of them. He found that the trail of Jesse James separated from that of his comrades, and that he had chosen the ruggeddest way of all.

"He has good nerve when it comes to close quarters," said Goldy to a companion, "but when it comes to taking care of himself in flight, he knows how, and he takes no risk that he can avoid."

"That's right."

"But woe to the man of us who meets him face to face in these wilds. He would sell his life dear, and you may gamble on it."

"Ah!—look!"

They were at the summit of a short, steep ascent. They were in full view of it, and they could see the rugged path that wound up and up until it seemed to pierce the deep blue of the arching sky above.

And there they beheld a lone figure climbing with swift, tireless strides. He was so distant that he looked like a monstrous insect crawling up the face of the rocks.

"I believe it is he!" exclaimed Golding.

He raised his glass and added:

"It is Jesse James. But there is another pursuing him—and, by heaven!—it is a woman!"

"Who can it be?"

"I can only guess. He had a sweetheart in Denver, and, as everybody knows, he has a wife in Missouri. I know that the Denver girl has found out the truth about him, for he deceived her. I think it is she who is hot on his trail yonder. Ha!—he sees her—and she has fired at him!"

The puff of smoke could be seen. But the bandit king did not fall. He leveled a revolver, but seemed to be speaking to her.

Another puff from the woman's weapon, and Jesse James staggered.

Then there was a shot from him—and the girl fell, and lay a dark speck upon the rocks.

"The villain!" hissed Golding's companion.

"He is that. But it might be said that he did it in self-defense, and not until she had drawn the first blood."

As he spoke Goldy unslung his own rifle.

"What are you going to do?"

"Try the range of this shooter. It will at least show Jesse that I am here, and that there were witnesses to his last foul crime."

He took careful aim.

The sharp crack split the air, and Goldy's companion, having the glass to his eyes, saw Jesse James throw up one hand and stagger back against the rocks.

"You are a wizard, Goldy!" he exclaimed.

"It was a spent bullet, and it will make him awful sore, but the pity is, that it hadn't been thirty yards nearer."

"In that case it would have been Jesse James' last call."

"It would have been his last call."

The sound of the shots drew others into sight, and soon the whole party of pursuers were fairly on the right trail.

It soon became a trail of blood. And yet, follow it as they might, another nightfall found the fugitive still in advance. And with darkness the trail was lost.

And how fared Jesse James, the king of American outlaws?

The wound from Goldy's long-range shot gave him considerable trouble, but, with his usual resolution, Jesse kept on. When darkness arrived he doubled on his own track, and then, making use of a narrow passage among the rocks, of which no one, perhaps, except himself knew, he succeeded in finding his way to another ravine, and thence to such a labyrinth of rocky passages that he was sure of present safety, at least.

But when he paused at last, it was after he was spent with fatigue, hunger and pain. He had killed Nellie Clayton in self-defense, but the deed made him heavy-hearted. His spirit, too, was well-nigh gone. Had he then met his foes he would hardly have made a fight for his life.

He would probably, in his desperation, have blown out his own brains, as many a better man has done when weary in body and mind.

But with rest and food, courage and all the bitter thirst for vengeance against society returned.

Jesse James would again be master of himself and of his followers.

"They shall hear from me again, no matter how long may be the day before I appear to them!" he muttered many times that day, as he lay in his lonely retreat, suffering pangs of thirst and of pain.

Doubly embittered, Jesse James was yet to prove a more formidable desperado than he had ever been before.

Had the whole party of pursuers not concentrated their efforts upon the attempt to run the leader to earth, at least Frank James might on this occasion have been brought to the end of his life trail. But, as it was, the older brother was given ample opportunity to hide himself away and nurse his disappointment over the failure of his raid on the Sutherland ranch.

Golding arrived in St. Joseph several days later, and, of course, went almost directly to the Sutherland home.

The major was in a state of nervous collapse over anxiety about his wife and daughter, who had arrived here the day after their rescue from the ranch.

There was another thing on his mind which it was not easy to banish from his thoughts—a sense of guilt and remorse, such as a virtuous man should never have cause to feel.

Not until Golding came did he summon resolution to tell Agnes the truth.

"Do you know, my girl," he exclaimed, "that I let you do this friend of ours the blackest kind of an injustice, even when he was trying to save me from ruin?"

"Better let it drop now, major," said Goldy, as he picked specks of lint and dust from his immaculate oatsleeve.

Agnes was looking at him.

"No, I want to hear it all," she said.

"Well," said her father, with a shake in his tones, "I have been an unmitigated old cheat."

"There, there, that will do, major," laughed Goldy.

"I'll tell the truth and shame his majesty," growled the major. "I spent a year in Denver, as you know. I like to play, and I don't squeal if I am the loser. But, as a general thing, I have done my share of winning. I won money, nuggets, railroad and mining shares. Then I ran up against a sharper, who turned the tables against me. It was Golding here." The latter was smiling, while he took furtive glances into a mirror to see that his necktie was straight.

"He won, and won. Then another sharper came along, and he won and won. Golding let up on me, and looked on. The other sharper got everything I had left, after Goldy had dropped the game. I thought they were in league."

"Go on—go on!" urged Agnes.

"You didn't know, when I came back here that I was stone broke. But it was so. Then, by mail there comes to me, the certificates of stock that this rascal won from me. And he has since told me that he gambled with me in the hope of cleaning me out before the other sharper should get after me. Don't you see?—Goldy won so that the other would not get everything, knowing that I should get nothing back from him. That was the whitest play I ever struck. And that isn't all."

"Tell me!" breathed Agnes.

"He has restored to me the most valuable part of my losses to the other sharper—the stock in the Gilt-Edge Mining Company. It comprises the bulk of my fortune."

"How—how did he do that?"

"Ask him."

"It was a simple matter," said Goldy; "I found that the stuff was given by the winner to a young woman in the city, who he was basely deceiving. I went to her, told her the truth and got her to make a transfer of it back to Miss Sutherland. A short story, if she had given the papers to me. But no—he fooled her still more—or hypnotized her—as you please, and got her to give them up to him. As they stood they were of no good in his hands. When she confessed it to me I started out to make him give them back to me. Then I found out who he really was, and it turned out to be a long chase, and a rather nervy wind-up."

"Who was it?" asked the major—for he did not know, any more than did Agnes.

"Jesse James!"

"Impossible!"

"It is true."

It need hardly be said that there was any more proof as to the good will of Golding called for in the Sutherland household after this. He became a regular visitor there, for reasons which are easy to guess.

Durling also came frequently, attracted by the same magnet. It was a good-tempered rivalry, and Goldy, as he usually did when he started a game, won.

The game begun betwixt Golding and Jesse James, however, seemed not to have been played to a finish.

Whether it was ever to be opened again or not, this is not the place, nor the time to say.

THE END.

Next week's issue (No. 43) will contain Jesse James Surrounded; or, The Desperate Stand at Cut-throat Ranch. Jesse was never nearer death or capture than on this occasion. Don't miss it, boys.

LOOK ON PAGE 30 FOR NAMES OF PRIZE-WINNERS.

ABOUT FAMOUS MEN.

You have seen the names of the prize-winners, boys? Are you one of them? We congratulate you if you are. Whether you are or not, get your coat off and roll up your sleeves for the new contest. You know all about it. If you don't, look up the list of prizes on page 30, and then get to work. The new contest is already well under way, and already enough entries have come in to make a small-sized snow-storm. Remember, if you didn't win a prize, or didn't see your contribution printed in the last contest, you may do better in this. Your letter may be printed yet. We couldn't print them all, of course, but here are a few more of the best.

A Few Facts About Garfield.

(By W. D. Sutton, New York.)

About seventy-five years ago when the great State of Ohio was little more than a wilderness, a man by the name of Abram Garfield moved from the State of New York out into the wild country of Ohio and settled in Cayahoga County. After he had been in Ohio about a year his youngest son, James A. Garfield, was born, November 19, 1831. When he was a young boy James did not have the advantages that most boys do now, but had to do his share of work on the small farm which his father had cleared a few years before. When he was about fourteen years old he managed to obtain a position on the canal, where he worked about two years. From the canal he went to Williams College in Massachusetts, where he graduated in 1856. He studied law, and was a member of the Senate in 1859 and 1860. He entered the army in 1861 as colonel of the Forty-second Volunteers. After the war, he was distinguished in Congress. He was finally elected President of the United States.

On July 2, 1881, four months after his inauguration, he was shot by Charles Guiteau, a disappointed office-seeker.

Garfield lingered along, suffering great pain, until September 19, of the same year, when he died at Elberon, New Jersey.

Perry's Victory.

(By Frank Vermillion, Washington, D. C.)

When Captain Perry, then only twenty-seven years old, was assigned the command of the flotilla on Lake Erie, the British were undisputed masters of the lake, while his fleet was to be, in part, made out of the trees in the forest.

By very severe exertion he got nine vessels, carrying fifty-four guns, ready for action, when the British fleet of six vessels and sixty-three guns bore down upon his little squadron. Captain Perry had never seen a naval battle, while the commander of the British ship, Captain Barclay, was an old veteran and had lost an arm in the service.

Perry's flagship, the *Lawrence*, engaged two of the heaviest vessels of the enemy and fought them till but eight of his men were left. He helped these to fire the last gun, and then leaping into a boat bore his flag to the Niagara. He had to pass within pistol shot of the

British, who turned their guns directly upon him, and though he was a fair mark for every shot, he escaped without injury.

Breaking through the enemy's lines and firing right and left, within fifteen minutes after he mounted the deck of the *Niagara* the victory was won. Perry at once wrote to General Harrison, September 10, 1813:

"We have met the enemy and they are ours."

This dispatch caused great excitement and joy all over the country.

Bill Nye.

(By Albert Roy, Buffalo, N. Y.)

A man who has made many others happy I consider great man.

Such a man was "Bill Nye," under whose humorously sayings the domestic and financial cares of multitudes have been made, for a time, at least, to vanish.

It was "Bill" who originated the story about a battle wherein a man's leg was shot off at the knee by a cannonball. Of course, he dropped to the ground and began to bleed profusely. But he soon rallied sufficiently to summon a comrade to his aid.

As the latter approached, he asked:

"What is the matter?"

"Why, can't you see, man, my leg is shot off and will bleed to death if you don't carry me to the hospital at once," said the wounded man.

Thereupon the wounded soldier was placed upon his friend's shoulder and the march toward the hospital began. The bearer of the wounded man had not gone far, however, when he was stopped by the captain of the regiment who gruffly demanded:

"What do you mean, Brown, by wasting your time with that fellow when we need every man we have up in the field?"

"Why, you see, sir, this fellow's leg has been clipped off, and—"

"Leg, nothing!" interrupted the captain. "Carry him off, you see that his head is gone? Get back to your post, sir."

The captain had spoken truly; on the way to the hospital another cannonball had taken the afflicted man's head off back of his would-be rescuer's shoulder.

The bearer of the dead man stopped, and laying his burden upon the ground, looked upon it in undisguised astonishment. Then he said:

"You are right, captain; but it really isn't my fault, for he told me it was his leg."

And there was more in William Edgar Nye than appeared upon the surface. He was an affectionate husband, a loving father and a true friend of humanity.

The world is better for his having lived in it. He gave alms freely, but not indiscriminately. He rests beneath the heartfelt blessings of a multitude.

Washington and the Corporal.

(By Lafayette Briggs, Mass.)

During the revolution George Washington was out taking a walk. He did not have his military costume on and came upon a little squad of soldiers trying to raise a big log of timber to the top of some military works they were repairing.

The log was going up with difficulty, and the officer, a little corporal, was often shouting out:

"Heave away! There she goes! Heave away!"

Washington asked the corporal why he did not take hold and render a little aid. The corporal, astonished, and with the air of an emperor said:

"Sir, I am a corporal."

Washington, taking off his hat and bowing to the corporal, said:

"I ask your pardon. I was not aware of that, Mr. Corporal."

Then Washington helped lift till the sweat stood in drops on his forehead. When the work was finished, turning to the corporal, he said:

"Mr. Corporal, when you have another such job send for your commander-in-chief, and I will come and help you a second time." The corporal was thunderstruck when he found out who he was talking to.

Abraham Lincoln.

(By Alfred Greenhalgh, Rochester, N. Y.)

Abraham Lincoln, the sixteenth President, was born in Kentucky on February 12, 1809. Of his early years he said himself in 1859: "My parents were both born in Virginia. My mother died when I was young. When I came of age I did not know much. I could read, write and cipher to the rule of three, but that was all. The little advantages I have now I picked up under the pressure of necessity.

"At twenty-one I came to Illinois. I was raised to farm work, which I continued till I was twenty-two years old. When the Black Hawk War came on, in 1832, I was elected a captain of volunteers. In 1833 I was sent to the Legislature, and re-elected for three succeeding terms. During my legislative period I studied law, and removed to Springfield to practice it.

"In 1846 I was elected to the lower house of Congress. From 1849 to 1854 I practiced law. I was always a Whig in politics."

In 1828 he made a trading voyage on a flatboat to New Orleans. Here the sight of slaves, chained and maltreated and flogged, was the origin of his deep convictions on the slavery question. In 1854 he had the great debate with Douglas. From this he gained great

popularity. He was proposed for the Senate in 1855, but after several ballots Lyman Trumbull was chosen. When Fremont was nominated for the Presidency Lincoln was put forward for the Vice-Presidency, receiving 110 votes; but the place went to William L. Dayton. In 1858 he ran against Douglas for the Senate and was beaten. In 1860 the Republicans nominated him for the Presidency. He received the votes of every free State, while the votes of all the slave State were cast against him. He was elected after a bitterly-contested campaign, and on March 4, 1861, was inaugurated in Washington, surrounded by soldiers under command of General Scott, where he swore to "faithfully execute the office of President of the United States," and to the best of his ability "preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

Sheridan's Ride.

(By Martin Larkin, Mass.)

In September, 1864, at the time of the Civil War, there was fighting in the Shenandoah Valley between General Sheridan of the Union forces and General Early of the Confederate forces, in which Sheridan was the victor.

Later on Early took advantage of Sheridan's absence from his army to surprise the Union forces at Cedar Creek in the Valley. They retreated, and the retreat soon became a panic. Sheridan was then at Winchester, twenty miles away. He heard the cannon with their

"Terrible grumble and rumble and roar,
Telling that battle was on once more."

Mounting his horse, he hurried to the scene of disaster. As he came up a great cheer greeted him from the Union cavalry.

"We must face the other way," shouted Sheridan to the retreating men. They did face the other way, and so effectually that they speedily drove the Confederates flying out of that part of the valley.

Clara Barton.

(By Aline Walker, Winston, N. C.)

Clara Barton was born in Worcester County, Mass., in 1830. She early learned to earn her own bread. She was a bookkeeper, and as clerk and bookkeeper for her brother she early learned the rubs of business. Educated in the public schools, she became a school teacher when very young. She was employed in the Patent Office for three years, but in 1857 she lost her place because she was suspected of holding anti-slavery sentiments.

When the Civil War broke out she went to Washington. The troops gathered rapidly, and soon the hospitals were filled with wounded. The work she assigned to herself was the care of the sick, visiting them daily, carrying to them reading matter, comforting them with delicacies, and writing letters to their friends. For a time she remained at Washington. Then she followed the army to the battlefield.

She was in the bloody fights at Fairfax Station, at Antietam, and at Fredericksburg. She organized a

bureau of records of missing men in the army. The object of this bureau was to gather information concerning the missing and to communicate it to their friends.

For this work for the soldiers she expended her whole fortune of \$10,000. Then Congress voted her \$15,000 to reimburse her for her expenditure and to help her carry on the bureau.

After the war was over she went to Europe for her health. When the Franco-German War began in 1870 she joined the Red Cross Society and helped to organize the German hospital service.

Three years later she returned to America and organized the Red Cross Society here, and in 1881 became president of the society.

When the Johnstown flood occurred Clara Barton was on the scene and did much to relieve the people.

Now came the civil war in Cuba, when the Cubans rose in opposition to the Spanish government. To the relief of the suffering Cubans came Clara Barton with supplies from the people of the United States.

There she remained until the Maine was blown up. Then she came back to America. Soon after her arrival in Washington war was declared with Spain.

Back to Cuba went Miss Barton, with hundreds of other women anxious to aid her. There she remained throughout the war, nursing friends and foes alike. Although sixty-eight years old, Miss Barton is still very active and ready to go wherever she is needed.

TALES OF HUNTING AND TRAPPING.

LOST AMONG THE ALLIGATORS.

Many years ago I was journeying by steamboat up one of the many bayous or creeks in the southern part of the State of Louisiana.

In the course of the morning the steamboat drew up at a wooding station to take in a supply of fuel, and led by curiosity, I went ashore with a lad about my own age. Growing tired of watching the negroes carrying the split wood on board, we yielded to the temptation to venture a little way into the forest.

A squirrel crossed our path. We gave chase, and the frisky little animal led us on till we found ourselves out of hearing of the hissing of the steam and the voices of the negroes at the woodpile.

Suddenly a bell rang; this we knew to be the signal for the steamer's departure, and were horrified to note how faint and far-off the sound appeared. However, shouting at the top of our voices, we turned back.

Through brambles and briers, thorns and thickets, climbing over fallen logs and splashing through marshy places, we scrambled and leaped.

Then we distinctly heard the coughing of the steam and the dash of the paddle wheels. The boat had started! The sounds grew more indistinct, and our hearts sank as we heard them rapidly die away in the distance. We thought it would be an easy thing to find the river; yet our efforts were utterly in vain.

After a time, no river appearing, we realized the fact that we were lost!

An hour or two passed, and we became sensible of the pangs of hunger. We searched our pockets, and discovered that one biscuit was our entire stock of provisions. This we divided and gloomily ate.

An incident now occurred which showed that our position had its positive dangers. A tall tree lay before us.

Upon mounting the log, I espied, coiled in many folds, with its rattle erect in the center, a huge rattlesnake.

Just as I was about to leap down, my eye caught its villainous glance. Fortunately I knew enough of serpent-lore to recognize this formidable enemy, and with a

shout and gesture prevented my companion climbing the log.

Nor were we a moment too soon. The creature had evidently observed us, for, as we fled, we heard his warning rattle, and momentarily expected him to spring over the log in pursuit.

As the sun drew westward we busied ourselves with picking out a tree suitable for camping purposes.

I helped my companion to mount one which was thick and bushy, in the branches of which he soon lay down.

I stayed below to watch for a last chance. It seemed a useless thing to do; yet, though hoarse with shouting I once more lifted up my voice.

Was it a fancy that there was a reply? We could not be mistaken, for both of us heard a faint, far-off response.

We waited with intense anxiety the approach of the stranger.

At length a gun barrel emerged from a great bank of rushes, followed by a rough, hunter-looking man.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"We came ashore from the Abeille at the wooding station and have lost our way."

"Whew!" he whistled, and rested on his gun; the scanned us both narrowly, for by this time my companion had slid down from his post among the branches.

"Guess you had better come with me," he said; and shouldering his rifle, he turned and pushed his way through the reeds.

Soon we saw through the branches the glitter of water and came out upon the banks of a river, smaller than that upon which we had passed in the steamboat in the morning.

Here, concealed in the rushes, was a canoe, which he quickly launched, swinging the head round to where we were standing.

Without speaking, he motioned us to get into the craft, then followed himself, laying down his gun and taking up a paddle. With a few strokes, he drove the canoe out into mid-channel.

Very soon the night fell, and the fireflies darted among the bushes on the shore. We now heard the barking of dogs, deep-toned and long-continued.

Ten minutes more and the canoe was laid alongside a shelving bank, some five or six feet high. Our boatman, quickly leaping ashore, fastened the chain of the canoe to a stump near the water's edge, and bade us disembark.

We followed our protector as best we could in spite of the growing darkness, till after traveling a few hundred yards, as far as one might judge in such a blind journey, we halted before a dimly-visible log house.

The man unfastened the door, whereupon two huge deerhounds leaped out, frisking and barking, and, in their canine fashion expressing the height of joy upon the return of their master.

Upon perceiving us they showed signs, lively and unpleasant, of doubt and animosity, till they were roared down by the deep voice of our conductor.

A match was struck and a pine-knot kindled. Heaping some dry wood upon the hearth, the hunter speedily had a blazing fire, whose ruddy glow showed up distinctly the rough interior of the house.

One of the first acts of our protector was to unroll a bundle from the corner and spread upon the floor a buffalo robe, upon which he bade me sit.

From the blazing fire he lit a rude lamp, which he hung from the roof. Then he produced his iron pot, and sharpening his knife, with the pot in one hand and the knife in the other, went out into the darkness.

He soon returned with water from the river in the pot, and in his hand a piece of deer's meat.

The pot was set upon the fire; the meat, cut into pieces and powdered with salt, put into it, and a handful of meal added, making a savory compound, which to us hungry boys seemed a delicious supper.

The serving of the meal was primitive. There was but one plate in the establishment; this the owner relinquished to his visitors, after having heaped it with smoking food, himself feeding leisurely from the pot.

We learned that our entertainer was an Englishman, who, in consequence of liberal views on poaching matters, had thought it more prudent to put the broad Atlantic between himself and his native village.

Here, deep in the backwoods, he lived a Robinson Crusoe kind of life, miles away from human habitation, supporting himself with his gun.

During the course of the evening we had been conscious of a growing babel of sounds, which arose on all sides in the great dark outside world, and which deepened in intensity as the night wore on.

Every now and then a hoarse bellow, as of some mammoth bull that, slumbering, had been awakened by intolerable agony, came from the alligators that abounded in the surrounding swamp.

We had noticed that the door of the hut was a crazy concern, loosely hasped, and with an unfastened padlock on the outside. Inside, its only protection was a wooden bar, which shot so smoothly in its grooves as to suggest that a strong-nosed animal could easily nose the door off its hinges.

Upon communicating our fears to our host, we produced upon his grim visage the nearest approach to a

smile that we had yet observed. He seemed entirely at his ease.

He had strange tales, such as that one day he came home and found an old alligator asleep on his hearth; how that rattlesnakes had frequently crept in through the interstices of the logs; and how that almost every evening after dusk, at certain times of the year wolves prowled around.

Then our protector informed us that we must be stirring with the dawn. He would take us in his canoe a distance of ten miles, whence, by crossing a narrow tongue of land, we might reach a steamboat landing.

With lively interest we watched his preparations for the night. He tried the wooden bar placed across the doorway. The logs were put together on the hearth. He then bade us wrap ourselves as well as we could in our buffalo robe; put out the clamp and then lay full length on the floor, near the hearth, and was soon fast asleep.

Wearied as I was, I could not sleep. The external noises grew louder and louder. The alligators waddled up and down the acclivity upon which the house stood.

At one time no fewer than four of these ugly reptiles were prowling around our little sanctuary.

Meantime, our host had fallen into the profoundest of slumbers, the audible proofs of which had in them some obscure consolation, for I could not but reason that a man who could sleep under such circumstances, and sleep so soundly, could not but be assured that there was no real ground for alarm.

So the event proved. Confused thoughts of rattlesnakes, alligators, wolves, steamboats that devoured, and rattlesnakes that coughed and paddled, clouded my brain, until I fell off into an uneasy slumber, gradually deepening into utter unconsciousness.

When we awoke our host was standing in the open doorway, drying himself with a strip of canvas, after his matutinal wash in the river.

He had put a can of water over the fire, and, bruising some coffee berries between two stones, he made us a not unacceptable beverage. Biscuits, coffee—without either sugar or milk—and the considerate relics in the iron pot from his last night's supper, made our breakfast.

We were soon on board the canoe, and were rapidly drifting down stream. The distance was quickly accomplished, and connection with civilization rapidly made; but I shall never forget that night spent among the alligators.

EXCHANGE COLUMN.

(Notice.—This column is free to all our readers, but we cannot be responsible for transactions made through it. All offers must be strictly exchange offers, and no "for sale" advertisements, or exchanges of explosives, or worthless articles will be printed. Address all communications for this column to "Exchange Column.")

Leslie Engdoh, of Colvert, Texas, wishes to exchange 1,000 tobacco tags for novels or songs.

John Brenner, 334 S. Pearl St., Albany, N. Y., will exchange Buffalo Bill stories from 1 to 30, and Diamond Dick, Jr., 264 to 269, for Whitely exerciser or best offer.

THE PRIZE WINNERS. Boxing Contest Now Running

The Editor of the JESSE JAMES WEEKLY takes great pleasure in announcing the winners in the recent contest. The enormous number of articles sent in has made it harder than in any previous contest to decide on the ones having the most merit, but the judges have successfully picked the winners out of over 5000 contestants, although it was a nip and tuck race between many of the young writers.

The winners of the first prizes, who are each awarded a first-class Camera, are:

Malcolm D. Reed, 38 Harrison St., Leominster, Mass.
George Nordlin, 401 St. Peter St., St. Paul, Minn.

The winners of the second prizes, who are each awarded a "Sterling" Magic Lantern Outfit, are:

Raymond Gooksey, 7938 Lowe Ave., Chicago, Ill.
Charles Pitzold, East Boston, Mass.
Roy L. Townsend, Freeport, Me.
Arthur R. Jones, Quenemo, Kan.
Robert Green, Bowling Green, Ky.

The winners of the third prizes, who are each awarded a handsome Pearl-handled Penknife, are:

V. T. Levy, Pittsburg, Pa.
William E. Doersein, Buffalo, N. Y.
William M. Carter, Brooklyn, N. Y.
Joseph Steinberg, Albany, N. Y.
Leon L. Frame, Milwaukee, Wis.

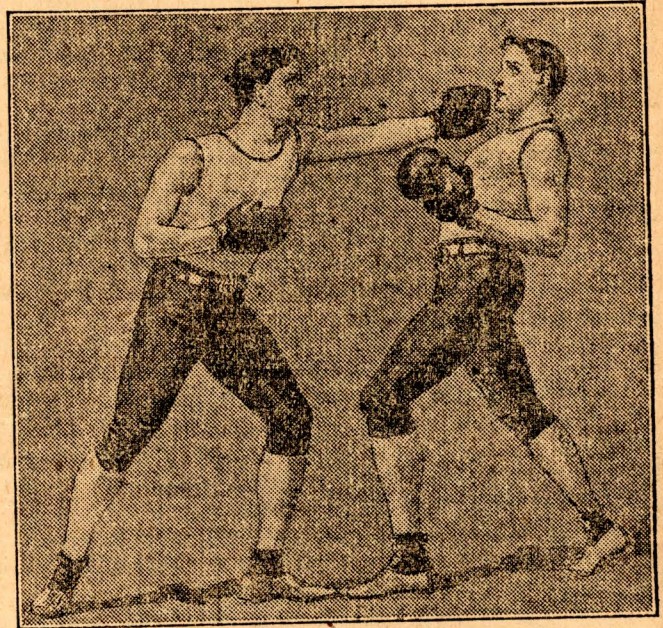
The winners of the fourth prizes, who are each awarded a set of the Latest Puzzles, are:

William Kerr, Jr., Irwin, Pa.
Miles Burns, Westfield, Mass.
John Brenner, Albany, N. Y.
Donald Wilson, Bradford, Pa.
Morris Rosson, Lincoln Hotel, Washington, D. C.
James Jerppe, Pittsburg, Pa.
Garry Pearson, Mexico, Mo.
S. F. Luterick, 700 Washington St., Alleghany, Pa.
Eddie Walker, 210 Pond St., Winston, N. C.
Charles Prutzmann, Josephine, Mo.

Hats off to the winners, boys! The editor heartily congratulates them.

And now just a word to those who do not find their names among the winners. Some of you will never know how near you came to winning a prize. It took long thought to decide between some of the contestants. So don't be discouraged, boys, but try again in the new boxing contest, now running. Enter it this week!

NOTE TO PRIZE WINNERS.—If your full address does not appear in the above list, you should send it at once to the Editor of *Jesse James Weekly*, so that you may receive your prize promptly.



SEVENTEEN PRIZES

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FIFTEEN **SPALDING BOXING GLOVES**
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Every boy who has ever seen a boxing contest has a chance to capture one of the prizes. The contest may be between boys or men, beginners or well-known amateurs. If you should not win a prize you stand a good chance of seeing your story and name in print, anyway.

To become a contestant you must cut out the Boxing Contest Coupon on this page, fill it out properly, and send it to JESSE JAMES WEEKLY, 238 William Street, New York City, together with your article.

No contribution without this coupon will be considered. Come along, boys, and make things hum.

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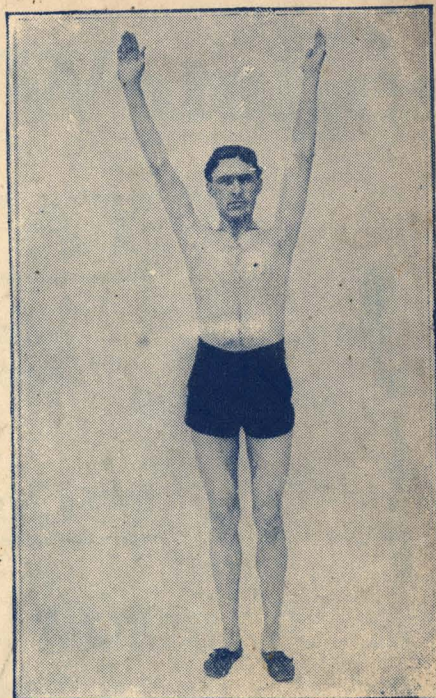
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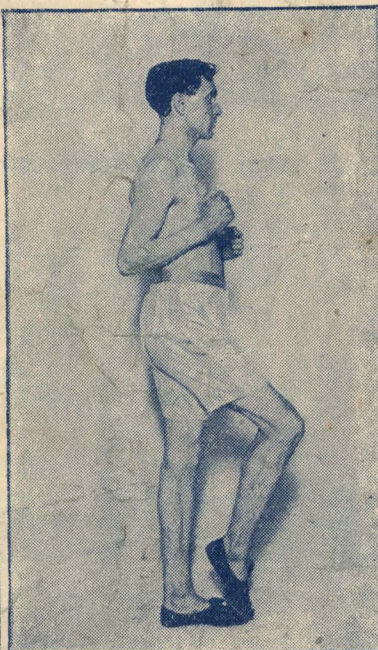
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